

## **Gone But Not Forgotten, 201**

### **"Everybody's A Picasso"**

If you find yourself getting stabbed to death in the shower out of nowhere, your first and last question is probably going to be something like, "What the fuck?"

If you find yourself *watching* somebody get stabbed to death out of nowhere, the horror lies somewhere else, less visceral: "What the fuck happened to Norman Bates?"

*Psycho* is indelible, like all good psychological horror, because you are left wondering what lead to the point where the stabbing starts, how the lady got mummified down in the basement, who the monster is, how we got here, if it could happen to you. It asks those questions and this odd little show answers them, in a complicated and surprisingly loving way:

**What the fuck happened to Norman Bates?** *Life.*

**What the fuck did Norma Bates do to her son?** *Loved him.*

**Who's the monster?** *No such thing. Find a better word.*

### **PREVIOUSLY**

Norma took the lemons of her abusive husband's mysterious death, and made lemonade: Specifically, establishing a northwestern paradise where she could raise a man in perfect harmony with the world. The world did *not* approve, and found a million and one ways to punish her for even thinking such a thought. Sent wolves and monsters and demons and bears to her door, all with one intention: To keep her from saving him, to drag that boy out of her home and into the concrete world.

Her older son showed up, and basically beat himself bloody against the door until she grudgingly let him in. Lovers descended on her innocent son, tearing him into a million horny pieces. There were sex slaves and drug wars and pioneer justice and violation and tons of murders. But in the end, Norma and her boys made it to the other side. Nearly.

While Norma and Sheriff Romero were taking out the last of the sex slavers, freeing her up to do her best with the motel, Norman was at a school dance ditching one girl -- his best friend -- and getting the shit kicked out of him for loving another, whose own feelings had settled on his brother; whose own father died under mysterious circumstances. When his teacher Miss Watson offered him a ride home, every part of him was telling him it was dangerous, and that's when he blacked out and found himself running home in the rain.

### **THE NEXT MORNING**

It's raining hard, still; the storm lights up Juno the Taxidermied Dog as Norman tosses and turns. Downstairs, Norma gets a recorded call from the phone tree: Miss Blaire Watson -- "B" is for "Blaire," as in Bradley's father's mysterious lover whose first name we're hearing for the first time -- was found with

her throat slashed all to hell after the dance last night, so there's no school on Monday because of the funeral. (As we'll learn, Miss Watson was from an old White Pine Bay family, in some circles at least.)

**Norman:** "What's up? I could feel you getting weird down here."

**Norma:** "Can you go over the events of last night for me again? Just real quick."

**Norman:** "I had a shitty night, Miss Watson offered me a ride, cut to I was running home in the rain."

**Norma:** "It's that lacuna I'm interested in. Did you get in the car?"

**Norman:** "That's the opposite of running around in the rain, right? What's up?"

**Norma, verbatim:** "Apparently someone killed her."

## **FUNERAL**

Emma stares, not entirely coldly, as Norman leans heavily on his mother, sobbing loudly enough that he breaks the minister's concentration. It's a very Bates moment, the kind of thing Norma does five times a day, but it throws her off a lot more when it's not her doing it. Staunch Dylan holds the umbrella over them -- trying to love Norman, as always, from the other side of Norma's body -- and when Norman finally collapses, he takes her purse, so she can wrap her arms around their boy.

## **BACK HOME**

Norman stares out the window, utterly uninterested in food.

**Norman:** "She was so kind, why would anybody hurt her?"

**Norma:** "Perspective, honey. Nobody ever knows anybody. You knew the part that paid attention to you and believed in you and your weird short fiction, for sure. But we only ever see the tip of anybody's iceberg. You could be a good teacher, or a good cop, or a good boyfriend, but that doesn't rule out they might also have a Chinese sex slave chained up in their basement."

**Norman:** "For reasons that have to do with my psychology, I cannot be hearing that she wasn't an awesome person right now."

**Norma:** "I'm not saying she wasn't! I'm just saying we see what people want us to see. And vice versa. Everybody wears different faces -- that doesn't mean any of them are lies. Just that we're not usually capable of seeing the whole thing. Everybody's a Picasso."

**Norman:** "But what of justice?"

**Norma:** "Oh, honey. Not your problem. Take it from one who knows."

She leaves and Norman stands still at the window, in the rain. Fondling Miss Watson's pearls.

## **BRADLEY**

I think this was last night, but maybe it's tonight when the sun goes down: Bradley drives her little two-seater very fast all over the place, mascara in a definite downward spiral, with the love letters between her father and the mysterious "B," having lost him twice: Once to immolation, and now again to the fact that she never really knew him. She is swigging straight from the bottle because -- as we'll see -- when Bradley Martin decides to go crazy, she means to go *all the way crazy*.

*Brother, brother, brother / You need to learn a thing or two  
...Lie, lie, lie / And you look me in the eye  
Brother, brother, brother / Little boy, you've got some nerve  
Brother, brother, brother / You're gonna...*

After a great shot of her abandoned car, cattywampus on the bridge, we join her at the edge of it and just as the song is expressing her deepest thing, which is right that her dad can go fuck himself wherever he is, she drops straight down, and the music goes silent. Credits! I forgot how this show rolls, that was amazing.

Also, Bradley is my favorite and I would never forgive this show if they killed her off. What they are doing instead is taking the *reason* she is my favorite, which was always mostly implicit unless you were looking for it, and made it shine brighter than the sun. I tend to forget these recaps soon after I write them, so I might be repeating myself, but there is no iconic character I love more than the Serena van der Woodsen/Lisbon Girl except one: When the Lisbon Girl goes Dark Phoenix. Marnie Michaels on *Girls* is fully in the solution this season, just on fire with it. Serena, man, every time she'd edge up on full crazy I would get letters from readers telling me not to get my hopes up.

It's not about gender or gay stuff, at least not directly, and it's sure as hell not about camp: It's that I identify most with characters who are firmly treated as though their outsides are their insides, characters whose narratives are about how we moderate and mediate sexual objectification as **a tool** and **a weapon**, as **prison** and **glory**. It's not even always about being a commodity so much as being radioactive: You are always under surveillance, you are always a Thing -- you are always a mirror to pieces of whatever man is looking at you -- and while that's true for absolutely everybody, it's something only women and gay dudes have to be constantly and consistently aware of, for the purposes of survival. So when a Lisbon Girl says fuck it, that's about as satisfying as things get for me, televisually. "Tear off your own head, it's a doll revolution."

#### **4 MOS LATER**

Norma's got a kinky new haircut and she is just about as happy as anybody ever was. Butterflies in the grass, summertime boarders down filling up the motel, she's got it all. Haim singing about how it's gonna be okay no matter what, the whole nine. Down in the office, Emma's checking people in left and right. She looks gorgeous! The summer is doing her well.

Emma neither knows nor hugely cares where Norman is, which means they both know where he is: A shadow passes over Norma's face, and Emma jumps to go find him, but Norma shrugs and heads back up the hill, to the basement.

Have we been down here before? Nothing sticks out. Now, it's a whole new thing anyway: Classical music, near-darkness illuminated by cobwebbed lamps over tables. Taxidermied animals everywhere. He's doing a beaver today, bloody scalpel in his hand; the precision of doing things right. That growing sophistication in his art.

**Norma:** "Get your cute little butt upstairs, we have a business!"

**Norman:** "But Mother, I am busy. I must finish."

**Norma:** "Meaning five minutes? Five hours? I have no way of knowing how long it takes to take apart a woodchuck and put it back together again. We got a line out there."

**Norman:** "It is a *beaver*, not a *woodchuck*, and it is very important. The most sophisticated animal I've ever gotten to work on solo."

**Norma:** "My whole life is about keeping you away from those. Now get upstairs and do normal things! Swimmin' holes. Stealin' bowling shoes. Cramming yourself into telephone booths. It's summertime, you need some color! But also to help me run our *sold-out motel!*"

God's like, "Oh, is Norma Bates happy? How the fuck did I let that happen? Let me find my keys, I'll be right there."

## OFFICE

Emma and Norman are passably chill with each other, but it's sad how they aren't best friends. She really did try to help him not fuck that up, if you recall. So world-wise about the ways of sex and everything and still so shocked when he pulled out his crazy like that. You'd think a girl with that much going on would be impervious to shame, but shame with malice behind it? Nobody can weather that. He was a real little prick at that dance. I'm sure they'll work it out, though. There is no better bro in all of WPB than Emma Dekody, except maybe Dylan Massett.

**Emma:** "I don't know how to say this where it's not weird, but here's a huge stack of letters you wrote to Bradley Martin in the mental institution after her suicide attempt. All marked *Return to Sender*."

**Norman:** "You did that in absolutely the classiest way possible, actually. Thanks. Um, I was concerned about her, is why there are hundreds of them. After the accident..."

**Emma:** "Suicide attempt."

**Norman:** "I know that, Daria! Don't make me flap my arms around this early in the morning. It was a euphemism."

**Emma:** "I know, kid. Sorry. She's getting out today, by the way. Jenna told me."

**Norman:** "Why would Jenna tell you about Bradley's comings and goings?"

**Emma, awesomely:** "It was weird, I was like, *How's Bradley doing?* and she was like, *The answer to your question is she's coming home today.*"

**Norman:** "Cool, that doesn't turn my world upside down or anything. Thanks for the info. Glad she's better and absolutely not scheming on how to turn this to my advantage, like some kind of gross Nice Guy."

## BRADLEY

Oh, Bradley's doing great. Zombie eyes, lank hair, yard-long stare. You can tell she's got *plans*, she's got *shit to do*, in the same way that gargoyles and Green Man sculptures always seem to have an agenda. But what is it? I hope it is doing more awesome things.

Do you remember that part in *Fight Club* where they say that if self-improvement is masturbation, self-destruction is \_\_\_\_\_? I think we all fill in that blank for ourselves, if we're lucky enough to get to that question at all. Whatever Bradley puts there, I can already tell you I'm gonna be in full support.

When Mrs. Martin arrives to get Bradley in her old dress and sandals that fit weird now and walking this new way that is like a cowpoke walks, Bradley is not having her mess. Barely says hello; slides through the hug like it's made of fog. Whatever her shit is that she has to do, it does not involve indulging her mother.

## KITCHEN

Norma's hair! I still can't get over it. She's cooking when Dylan appears, and she actually smiles at him without even thinking about it.

**Dylan:** "I want to give you money. I keep saying I want to move out, or steal your son and move out, but neither of those things is happening, so here is money."

**Norma:** "That's so sweet! Wait, I forgot to be horrible to you, hang on... got it. I'm not taking your money, Dylan! I know where it comes from -- your highly successful drug industry job, among the gross men that control our every movement and set one another on fire from time to time."

**Dylan:** "Norma, be a doll and stop busting my balls. If you're not touching drug money, that rules out every business in town. No laundry, no car wash..."

**Norma:** "My motel doesn't run on the drug trade! Except when it does."

**Dylan:** "I am enough of an adult to find all of this hilarious and loveable. I'm gonna leave this money on the counter, and you can have this fight with yourself. Due diligence. But I am going to need you to at least acknowledge how hard I am -- and have been, for a while now -- trying."

She does, not that she wants him to see it. There's something in the twirl, in the set of her hips as she swings back toward the sink that is just chilling. It's like she sees him with one eye as her son (her lesser son, but still her child) and with the other, as a man. With all the danger that implies, but access to none of the tricks she automatically flips into when she's dealing with a man. It's like one eighth of her body wants to flirt with him, just to get some kind of control over the situation and the rest of her body is like, "Bitch, we've been through this. Come on."

And you're saying, What about Norman? That's a completely different thing: He would have to exist separately, to be Other, before her body would act that way. She drapes herself around him because they are separated by a single meaningless letter: That's not flirtation, that's manifest destiny. Everybody's a Picasso.

## DRIVING

For instance, how much does Norma hate being in the passenger seat while Norman's driving that sweet-ass old Mercedes? A million. He can feel her, too; shifty eyes looking into every mirror at once, just like hers. At one point he actually slaps her hand away, but it's somehow adorable. The fields go by, and the distracting rattles, and all the time this monologue:

"Are you gonna pass this guy? Then why did you look in the side mirror and edge out like that? Whoa. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! You're too far off the road on this side! Get back towards the middle. Excuse me if I don't want you to suddenly find your wheel off the road in the dirt, and then suddenly we veer off into a tree... if you are going to pass this guy, which you should, make sure it's totally clear and then use your blinker... Okay. Go, go, go, go, go! Floor it, floor it! Get around this guy. Hurry!"

This is Norma, helping. It's everything you need to know about Norma right there.

**Norman:** "Like I need your counsel to avoid driving into a tree."

**Norma:** "You got around that guy pretty awesome. That was a thrill."

**Norman:** "Was that a compliment? Did you pry your white knuckles off the dashboard long enough to hand me an actual compliment?"

**Norma:** "Oh, for God's sake. Do you not want to learn? I'm trying to help."

**Norman:** "It's kind of like I'm not driving at all."

No, that's not what he says. What he says is, "I'm not sure that I *am* driving."

He's not wrong. Maybe he never will be.

## CEMETERY

**Norma:** "Oh, Norman. Not here, again. She died four months ago already!"

**Norman:** "Specifically, she was murdered. I never got the chance to say goodbye. One way or the other, I was not there at the time."

**Norma:** "I am absurdly jealous! You worship this dead woman, I mean, it was horrible. Yes. And it was sad. But she wasn't your friend, or your girlfriend, or your... um, relative..."

**Norman:** "You keep acting like mourning the death of someone special, and doing my favorite hobby, are things that are abnormal."

**Norma:** "They are both incredibly morbid, is that coincidence? Days spent mooning over some dead teacher, nights spent taking apart dead animals..."

**Norman:** "At this point is usually when it becomes about you..."

**Norma:** "It makes me feel like a bad mother!"

**Norman:** "There it is. Look, you're not a bad mother. You're being weird about being weird, that's what's weird. You know what, you fuckin' drive. I'm done."

He gets out and she shifts over, which cracked me up because in the Gus Van Sant version of *Psycho*-- which I always forget to compare this with the Hitchcock but was of course famously and hollowly shot-for-shot -- the weirdest part is how everybody kept sliding sideways out of the car. You're in the driver's seat, you park, you unbuckle and slide out the passenger door. So fucking weird and funny. And even funnier here, because her knees are all cranked up at the wheel as she arranges herself.

Although in the annals of this particular thing they do, nothing will probably ever be funnier than that time she got out of the car and went around the car and jerked him out of the passenger door. That was high mirth. Sad, and scary and funny... like this:

"Oh. Whew, whoa, you're going 42! I saw the speed limit was 35. And you hit two of those bump thingies in the middle of the road. I'm afraid you might just suddenly veer off into an oncoming truck, or..."

Her words, coming out of his mouth. Again.

She swerves to attack a highway crew, driving right into their business, but to be fair she pulls herself together immediately. She's getting better at the concrete world. I would imagine the motel's success has a lot to do with that: The safer you feel, the less crazy you act. One more paradox.

**Norma:** "Excuse me, what is the meaning of this?"

**Builder:** "Bypass road, connecting to the main highway across town? It's been on the books for about a million years?"

**Norma:** "Yeah, I kind of thought I'd killed that through sheer force of will?"

**Builder:** "Sorry, we break ground Monday."

God's like, "There we go. Whew." Although as my friend Paul pointed out, it's something of a touchstone with the movie itself that I never picked up on: Norman explains at one point that the reason his motel is so creepy and weird and surrounded by quicksand -- selling points, for the embezzling lady on the go -- is because of this thing that is currently happening, which explains why the highway's been such a motif this whole time. That, and the whole idea of Norma getting screwed no matter what she does, by the (literally) concrete world.

**Norma:** "They're actually building it. I thought I had time to fight it."

**Norman:** "What did he say, Mother?"

**Norma:** "*This is the road that's going to ruin our lives.*"

I am no fan of the person Stephen King is now, but I am a selective devotee of lots of his work. My favorites are the Richard Bachman ones, I reread those like they're Cormier. One of the best, for understanding this headspace, is called *Roadwork* actually, and it's about this: A person whose life is going to be destroyed by a similar construction project, and how nuts he is prepared to go about that fact. Great story, with this same Orwellian feeling of the world crushing down on you that is so typical of the Bachman books, and of Norma's everyday existence. I feel a "You gotta fight the power" speech coming on.

## THAT NIGHT

Norman drops by her bedroom to say he's just going into the village -- by which obviously he means scam on Bradley, because he is a dog with a bone -- and she's on her tummy, ankles crossed in Dear Diary mode, manically tapping away.

**Norma:** "No problem, I'm just putting myself on the agenda for the White Pine Bay City Council meeting. I am going to rouse the rabble, speak about the bypass, make a stand."

**Norman:** "Do you have a clear plan on what you're going to say? You should be prepared."

**Norma:** "I have until tomorrow."

**Norman:** "No, this is one of those things where you think being right is going to help you. You are going to wing it and it's going to be a disaster, because you're such a narcissist you think screaming IT'S NOT FAIR will bring mighty forces to your aid, if you only scream it the precise right amount of times. But that only works in here. Out there in the concrete world, people are persuaded by facts, arguments, rational logic. You're already a woman, you are already punching up. You need to come correct, Mother."

**Norma:** "I am prepared! With righteousness!"

**Norman:** "No see that's exactly what I..."

**Norma:** "Norman, we have to fight this! You've got to stand up for yourself in life! You can't let the world run over you!"

**Norman:** "That's exactly what I'm talking about. You cannot stop a city from building a road by will alone. No amount of abuse from any number of dead husbands will earn you that."

Not getting through. She pulls him over to the window and wraps herself around him, like a starfish, pointing out toward that beautiful neon blue. He closes his eyes, enraptured and they breathe with pride.

"We did that. All those cars, all those people out there in our motel, all of them -- every single one -- found us driving along the main road. Remember that first night we got to turn on the No Vacancy sign? You remember what that felt like? We started over. We came here to do it, and we did it, and I'm not letting anyone take that away from us. I will figure it out."

He knows when he's beat and takes off. She kicks her heels back up, and continues planning not what she will say, but how it will feel. A kiss on the cheek and a smile that fades as soon as he hits the landing, her voice echoing down: "You'll see, Norman. We're gonna do this. It's all gonna be good!"

## **BRADLEY**

Bradley pulls up into Gil's driveway, in a woody this time. She stalks about like a zombie in the night, never breaking eye contact. You remember redhead Gil – a.k.a. **CPO Laird from the Battlestar Pegasus** -- he's the top of the drug trade food chain as we currently understand it: Jimmy Bradley's formerly unseen boss that partnered Dylan with first Ethan and then Remo, the guy who believes in him.

**Gil:** "Bradley Martin, what do you want?"

**Bradley:** "What I want is, the information of who killed my dad. Don't bullshit a bullshitter, you worked with him every day. Help me solve this case."

**Gil:** "That is not how we do it in this town. How old are you, even?"

**Bradley:** "Old enough. If we're going down that route."



**Gil:** "You do not want to hear anything I have to say about your dad, besides I'm sorry for you."

**Bradley:** "I'm a big girl with a big crazy inside me. Try it."

**Gil:** "Fine. Your father was a disloyal shitheel who was out only for himself. Honor among thieves is a real thing and that's why he is dead. If you want to come inside, I can tell you more."

**Bradley:** "That is the rapiest thing I've heard all day. No thank you, sir."

**Gil:** "Wuss."

She fades back into the night, fully aware of the implications of everything that dude just said, but pretty much stymied.

Back home she goes through all the stuff again -- she has a dressform in her bedroom, I feel like I've noticed that before, it's interesting -- and there's the letters from B, and a pocket watch, and then suddenly a gun in the box. You would think that would be notable, or... where did this box come from? They were like, "Oh, let's not be nosy with the suicide girl's stuff. Just put it on her bed with a gun in it."

Her gun safety behavior is, to my untrained eye, very professional: She checks the clip, pops it back in, loads the chamber, aims at nowhere. Interesting girl, that Bradley Martin. I guess in retrospect it's good that we know she can handle a gun. She fingers the hole for a second, and then kind of abruptly brings the muzzle around to her face. As hard to watch as it is -- as deeply serious as this is, even under these heightened WPB circumstances -- I kind of enjoyed imagining that this is the kind of thing Bradley was always into, like, this is what she was doing up in her room this whole time, even before he died. It would make her magnetic attraction to Norman both more understandable and completely new, for starters.

Anyway, whether this Lynchian tableau is new or old Bradley Martin, it's interrupted by Mrs. M, who has let Norman into the house. Bradley's body wavers; nearly shuts the door the second it hears his name.

She sits at her desk, refusing to look at him after the Mother incident but not sending him away either. She scratch-scratches at something, drawing or writing something, while he talks. It's sad but a different kind of sad, how they aren't friends right now. What he is doing is very, very brave. It's also kind of gross, but he's such an earnest kid that you can't call him out for that part of it. He's not being disingenuous: He's being the thing that everybody loves in him or wants from him. He's being an innocent monster.

**Norman:** "I wrote you nearly every day..."

**Bradley:** "Yeah, but that would've invalidated me going ghost, which was the point."

**Norman:** "And now I am here to express feelings. Concern? Interest. How are you..."

**Bradley:** "Awesome. Human relationships are glorious, aren't they, Norman?"

**Norman:** "You say that almost like I'm the one doing an experiment. Maybe you're right. Listen, I am here to say one specific, cringe-worthy, kind of awful thing and then I will go."

"I heard that you tried to kill yourself and I tried to imagine what that would feel like, wanting to do that. It must have been terribly isolating, feeling that you had nowhere to turn, no one to talk to, no way out."

There's a way in which I don't even think he knows how cunning he's being. On the surface it's pretty standard stuff, but remember too that mirroring back her feelings about her father's death was how he

got her in the first place: Not only *You are so real to me, Lisbon Girl, that I tried to empathize with you* but also the kicker, which is *And I did pretty well*. And the secret bonus neither of them know, which is: *Because we are the same*.

"But, uh, you never need to feel that way. You need to know that you can always talk to me and that I will always be there for you, if you need me. As a friend. I just wanted to tell you that."

She doesn't move, doesn't breathe, doesn't wake from her spell until the door closes. Then it's back to the gargoyle task at hand.

At this time I'd imagine she thought something like, "That is a very nice thing to say, boy I don't care about one way or the other. But if this was Flatland you would be a circle and I would be a sphere. You don't comprehend one tiny bit of what I'm dealing with, so this is just a very nice sentiment. Boys think putting enough Kindness Coins in the Girl Machine results in Sex Prizes, nothing new there. I thought you were better than that, but nobody ever is."

But it doesn't mean he doesn't mean it, and she knows that too. In a way, by doing the most obvious move he is actually moving the goalposts entirely: They already slept together, he (well, Mother) already called her a slut and scared her, and now he's saying there's a whole new story where we go back to basics and I am just your Emma again. Which is fine, because Dylan is still her Bradley.

## **CEMETERY**

After some perfervid Miss Watson memories and guilt images and general feverishness -- obit in one hand, pearls in the other -- Norman sets out once again to the cemetery, dressed nicely with a bouquet. He comes upon a man we don't know yet, standing at her grave and goes into predator mode: Flanks the guy, starts taking pictures. The fake camera-sound of a phone camera alerts the visitor immediately, and eventually Norman is chased off a small cliff and rolls down onto the road, taking his pictures with him.

The effect onscreen is not the same as on paper, so I will tell you that Norman's mindset in this episode is not what we might think. Probably Norma has a question mark in her head about whether Norman murdered Miss Watson, and nothing he says is particularly comforting in that respect, but I had a genuine moment of surprise late in the episode when Norman said what's really going on this whole time, and I think it makes more sense on paper to talk about it here:

He is tremendously guilty about Miss Watson's death, and blacking out at her apartment, but not because he thinks he did it: That's the one thing Norma, and now Dylan, are tasked with keeping off his radar entirely if you recall. He's guilty because he loved her, and if he hadn't blacked out and vanished, *he could have saved her*. Never forget the man Norman Bates could be. And what that particular kind of guilt means is that he has to solve her murder, not let them sweep it under the WPB rug like everything else, because that's what a good man does.

So then the question becomes, how do we protect Norman from uncovering the murderer if we think -- even a little bit -- that *he* might be the one that did it? Not even a Picasso has enough dimensions that it can see itself. It'll rip right in half.

## DRUGS PLACE

Hippies sorting pot, Dylan stacking giant bags of pot. All kinds of drug things.

**Gil:** "By the by, if you see Jerry Martin's kid poking around, send her away. Nobody talks. Snitches get stitches in ditches."

**Dylan:** "What's going on?"

**Gil:** "She came to my gorgeous house last night asking shit like who killed her dad. I don't need that shit, I already solved my Jerry Martin problem."

**Dylan:** "I don't even know who that is or what you are talking about, but okay."

**Gil:** "She got locked up! Which is a shame, because she's smoking hot."

**Dylan:** "...It's barely okay for *me* to think that, you fucking monster."

**Remo:** "I am still on this show and thank God because I'm great. How's it going?"

**Dylan:** "Why does Gil hate Jerry Martin so much?"

**Remo:** "Here's a bunch of helpful information all at once. Jerry Martin was sleeping with his girlfriend, Blaire Watson, who not only was murdered four months ago but was also -- get this -- the daughter of the other big weed family in White Pine Bay."

**Dylan:** "Wow, my baby brother almost got molested by and possibly then murdered *royalty*? Impressively horrible. I can't imagine this won't have a thousand hideous consequences that affect every major storyline and character."

I didn't even hear that line about the weed dynasties last night, but it does change a heck of a lot. So you've got Jerry, Gil and this abusive telephone guy "Eric" all thinking Miss Watson is their girlfriend. Gil, Jerry and now Dylan are part of one crew; Miss Watson is blood-related to the other crew but apparently did not have a problem hooking up with multiple people in Gil's crew, which seems calculated to spark off a drug war. (That's exactly how Speedy died in *Love and Rockets*, Esther Chascarillo pulling the same crap. Human relationships are glorious.)

So... questions: I guess that means that Eric is on the Watson side? I wonder if he'll ever come back in. Or if he was even an actual person. Or if Miss Watson even had prurient designs on Norman, although I do kind of think that's a given at this point. Even if she didn't know it, there was a yuckiness there that said she was looking for oblivion of one kind or another. Seeing how fast Bradley went Dark Phoenix makes me wonder if anybody that loves Norman does it in spite of, and not in some way because of, the darkness. It even fits Emma, who is bros with Death and whose dad is even more bros with Death.

All I know is, nothing better happen to Gil! The whole thing would destabilize. Verona, after Tybalt.

## WPBPD

Norman leans down to talk into the circle of the receptionist's window, same as his mother. (He does not smash his nose up against it like an animal, but I can't imagine it would be half as adorable if he did.) When Romero brings him back, he sits on our side of the desk, two cups of coffee, like we are just old friends having a chat and he's barely even really a Sheriff today. Such a Romero move.

**Norman:** "Okay so today I was at the graveyard on Shepherd's Hill, where Miss Watson's buried, and I saw this strange man standing at her grave. I took some photos... um, I remember one time she was in a screaming fight with somebody named Eric, and I was kind of assuming that's who killed her."

The music recognizes the man, whoever he is; Romero doesn't have a tell one way or the other about this.

**Romero:** "You go to her grave a lot? Of course you do. How come?"

**Norman:** "Because it's terrible? Because I had three friends and now I am back to zero friends, not counting Norma? Because murder?"

**Romero:** "I haven't felt this piercing pain in my temples since the last time I talked to a Bates. Must be going on four months now. Hey, have you ever been to her house?"

**Norman:** "Miss Watson's house? Ha! Ha! What a funny question. It has a funny answer, ha! Ha!"

**Romero:** "What is this that you are doing?"

**Norman:** "Just being super weird, ha! Sorry! Um, I went there one time or whatever. She was into my fiction, she wanted to help me publish it and so we met there... you know, she was a really good teacher. Always very appropriate in her behavior and..."

**Romero:** "I mean, it's not like we would know your prints from her house, you've never been fingerprinted before because you've never done like a hundred crimes, right?"

**Norman:** "Ha! I mean, all kids are fingerprinted so that's a weird thing to say, but ha! I bet lots of students went to her house. Not because she was a whore or a child molester or anything, just because of how community-oriented..."

**Romero:** "Okay kid I can't handle you anymore. I'll take care of it, okay?"

**Norman:** "Can I email you these photos of this random man? For the investigation?"

**Romero:** "You do whatever you want with them, kid. Man, you're tragic."

## WPB CITY COUNCIL

This lady of the PTA does not want young adults reading *Crime and Punishment*, because of a prostitute named Sonya who helps redeem the main character, a hatchet murderer of an old lady. It's dumb. This woman Marcy has put together a list of better books instead, which everybody pretends is very interesting and then they call to end the meeting. What happens next is a flameout in many steps.

First, Norma stands up on her two feet and asks why she wasn't on the agenda. The dick heading up the council asks backwards questions so she makes less and less sense, until finally she gets to say why she is actually there, which is to register her problem with the bypass road.

**Dick:** "And you are?"

**Norma:** "I'm Norma Bates, I own the sold-out Bates Motel!"

**Dick:** "Yeah, and?"

**Norma:** "Annnnnnd this new bypass is gonna screw me, so."

**Dick:** "By all means, come up to the microphone."

**Norma:** "Because I finally have a voice in the concrete world?"

**Dick:** "No, so I can torture you. Have you not seen this show before?"

The whole thing with the bad man who thought he should own the motel, remember, that started because he pissed her off in exactly this way: The idea that the world could sustain a woman with her own business and her own life apart from the ways and cruelties of men was just so preposterous and vile to him that he ended up attacking her. And the whole time she just kept saying, "I'm pretty sure I'm allowed to exist whether or not you fucking signed off on it," and the world kept saying she was too proud, too naïve, too silly to think that was ever a possibility.

And now here it is happening again -- in public -- and she's walking right into it again, and it's the same piece of property and the same conspiracy against her, which is a real thing! Institutionalized pressures and self-reinforcing systems are everywhere, it's true. It's not crazy to perceive and acknowledge those lazy cages of privilege and tradition that keep certain interests on top forever and ever. The crazy part, the part where you're being crazy, is the part where you refuse to work *with* them, thinking that by simply being *right* you've earned a place untouched by them.

So she steps up to the mic, which is of course physically hilarious to watch; she's proud as hell to be invited to the conversation -- finally, after a year or however long, part of the real world, a successful business owner, they said it couldn't be done -- and he just starts ripping at her immediately.

**Dick:** "So what's your plan for stopping the bypass, 'Norma Bates'?"

**Norma:** "To express my views, to the City Council?"

**Dick:** "Which you have done. And?"

**Norma:** "To scream loudly that it is not fair? No, that won't fly. Okay, I will give a big dramatic speech. About how White Pine Bay is northwestern gorgeous, and quaint, and this is a deal with the devil that only means big box stores and..."

**Dick:** "Our town doesn't deserve the money that comes with a highway and big new stores?"

Anybody else on Earth, when they say "You did not just say that to me," they are employing a rhetorical device. When Norma makes this particular nutty face, what she is saying is, literally, "*You did not just say that to me.*" That turtle thing she does, retracting her face into her neck -- she does this, at this point, at least twice. It is easily the craziest-looking thing she does and it gives me the willies every time, like she's literally insulted by reality. There's something of getting hit in it, too, but she only does it when she's enraged so that's not the first thing you notice.

**Dick:** "So you don't want business to succeed, unless it's your business. Got it. I think you're a little confused -- by which, yes, I mean female -- and frankly out of line -- which is also dog-whistle code for

female -- and I'm not even going to bother finishing this sentence. All in favor of ending the meeting? Ayes have it."

Oh, Dick. Oh, you do not know Norma Bates. But you are about to. Because one thing she *never* is, is confused. And one thing she *always* is, is *out of fucking line*.

"YOU ARE A DICK. Do you not understand that I am stuck in your drugged-out rape town because of this stupid bypass? I'm underwater, I was sold this property under false circumstances by a boy I nearly knocked his block off. Maybe that's a topic, real estate fucking fraud. Or, I dunno, the fact that YOUR ENTIRE GODDAMN TOWN RUNS ON DRUG MONEY? Would that not be more helpful than some fucked-up crazy housewife bitching about Dostoyevsky? You're worried about imaginary axe murderers and whores and your town is literally LITTERED with both of those things. I have had at least three of each in my personal goddamn house since I moved here. That's not on me, bitches! That is solely and squarely on your asses. I didn't scum up this motherfucker. *I tried to save it.*"

**Dick:** "Cool story. Meeting adjourned."

They all file out. But I'm assuming there's gonna be a **Patty Chase** somewhere during one of these speeches who is going to be like, "Norma Bates, right? You really told the City Council what for, I like your honesty. Let's be friends, until you totally skitz out on me and I remember that red flags are real, and in fact once you hit thirty you can totally read *every* book by its cover."

## DYLAN

Bradley Martin only knows how to drive one particular way, which is: Crazy! She still walks like a cowpoke, I keep trying to find another way to say that which better embodies its awesomeness but nothing quite gets there. Bradley's got swag. The kind of swag you get from looking death right in the eye and being like, "I got some shit to do first, bitch."

**Bradley:** "Dylan, thanks for finally meeting me at this abandoned park, with graffiti everywhere like a satyr or a man with a raccoon's head. Why so sneaky?"

**Dylan:** "Obviously because you are starting shit with drug lords and you are a child."

**Bradley:** "I'll back off when that fucker tells me what I wanna know."

**Dylan:** "No, you will back off regardless, because you are going to die and he's not gonna tell you anyway."

**Bradley:** "You have no idea how far I'm willing to go."

**Dylan:** "I know, that's why I'm here. The truth is that your dad was sleeping with Miss Watson. Her never-uttered first name is Blaire, which apparently you didn't know. She was also Gil's girlfriend and the princess of the other weed kingdom."

**Bradley:** "So Gil just went around killing everybody? That's messed up."

**Dylan:** "Going as super crazy as your stillness and raccoon mascara suggest you're about to? I wouldn't recommend it."

**Bradley:** "Cool how you're all about my safety suddenly. After zero communication."

**Dylan:** "That was not about not caring about you that was because of Norman. My brother likes you, which is more important than you liking me or me liking you back."

**Bradley:** "You are being such a tool!"

**Dylan:** "You seem like you are a person on fire and I don't know how to help those, despite a lifetime of practice."

**Bradley:** "You've given me just enough to go full-on Black Swan, thanks. See you in hell!"

She rips on out of there and even cool Dylan is like, "Not all the ladies all of the time, but certainly some ladies some of the time, are a fucking brutal hassle. It makes me seethe."

## **JUST A NORMAL STREET IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAYTIME**

**Norma:** "AH! You scared me!"

**Romero:** "Literally all I did was walk up to you. How come you're being nuts? I mean, so soon in our conversation."

**Norma:** "I am having a fucker of a day. What's going on with you?"

**Romero:** "Your son is once again meddling in our frontier justice. Are you aware he's morbidly obsessed with this teacher dying?"

**Norma:** "Tell me about it. Look, I know he seems weird but that's just because he is weird. This teacher meant something to him, what it is I have no idea, but he was very into it."

**Romero:** "I know he's 'sensitive' and somehow you've made that into bonus parenting points on your own behalf, but four months later is no time to be hanging around graves. He needs something else to do."

**Norma:** "Thanks for your advice! It is very much appreciated!"

They always have such a neat energy with each other, I forgot how it is. It's like they never look right at each other, they always talk past each other's faces. I guess because he's scared of how labile and skittish she is, and because she's scared of how labile and imposing men are. When you think about how much they owe each other, good and bad, it gets delirious real fast. I probably wouldn't talk directly into the eyes either.

## **HOME**

Norman's watching a creature-feature on that old-timey TV. I think it is a giant squid maybe? I had that in my notes, but then later on Gil has a tripartite painting of a giant squid on his wall at his house and it made me think this is a thing. That under the water of WPB there are beasts, and under the water of Norman in the concrete world, there is a beast. That Norma is always just coasting on the surface of the water because of all the people in the world she knows what's down there. Our lives are spent at the tippy-top of these icebergs and if you ever think about what's down there, it'll get you immediately.

I just think -- and this is what is currently saving Bradley, and ultimately will doom Norma and Norman both -- it's your duty to dive down, in, before the squid shows up to drag you away. Norma conflates the problems of the world and the problems of Norma because that's what a narcissist does, so her squid is quite literally everything that is not Norma. Norman's squid is Mother, the cruel twist in his DNA that

everybody can see but nobody can name. Their squids, you can't fight. You have to parley. But what makes the other characters sing -- Emma, Dylan, Bradley -- is that they *know* what their squids are, which is most of the trip. Then it just becomes how you fight it.

(My favorite part of the After Hours show, which was some amazing television to say the least, was when a viewer asked if a particular one of the named future guest stars was going to be a love interest for Norma and both Kerry Ehrin and Vera Farmiga coughed out this hideous giggle into the silence. I only caught the joke because I love the actor in question and already knew the role, and while I try to avoid spoilers this one in particular is a biggie, but still: Giant fucking Squid. Coming soon.)

**Norma:** "I am here to slap the TV off and make a big scene!"

**Norman:** "Oh my God, what now. They were just about to give the creature more slack."

**Norma:** "Romero grabbed me in broad daylight and told me all about how you were a good citizen and reported suspicious activity. What were you thinking?"

When she says this behavior is "not sane," his little face crumples in that horrible sad way, but quickly is replaced by seriously being confused what's going on. After she asks the right questions, he goes icy and discloses what he can.

**Norma:** "You are obsessed with that dead woman. Why? Why, Norman? Why are you obsessed with her death?"

**Norman:** "Fine. I went there. That night she died. I know, I said that she offered me a ride and then cut to I was running down the street. There was a part in the middle that was not my usual blackout. Or that too, I mean, but before the blackout we went to her house."

**Norma:** "Spill."

**Norman:** "I had a cut on my eye from getting beat up, and she cleaned it, and she was nice, she made me tea, she talked to me. It was normal. And then it wasn't. There was something going on, something unsafe and unlovely and weird, and I felt stranger danger feelings. Which is weird, because she was my friend. But not so weird, because she'd been attracted to me from minute one, which I couldn't and cannot process, which is why I kept having weird manga sex blackouts in her classroom. So one or both of us was heading into a bad area..."

**Norma:** "Oh my God, did you sleep with this one too?"

**Norman:** "It's not always going to be that, but good to know you've still got it locked and loaded. No, she offered to take me home but first she went into her room to change, and she left the door open and I could see her..."

How much of this is puberty, the inability to put into words what is happening, and how much of this is Mother? Because she was there, in the room, twisting his lips into a cruel smile. We saw her there. But the way he describes it now, it's more like some religious kid getting his first boner and thinking he has a disease. What a burden to be this boy.

Anyway, he describes it finally as he understands it, which is that the guilt and shame he's feeling have to do with Mother getting him the hell out the door and onto the road, in the rain, when he should have



stuck around because then he could have saved her. On the off chance she wasn't a predator or even if she was: She was his friend and his wisest and most interested adult, and for whatever reason he fled and left her to her doom.

**Norma:** "Okay but listen. She tried to seduce you, a child, and that was not appropriate. Whatever blackouts you get, that carried you away from that danger. She was good in some ways maybe, but you had no business being there, certainly. Can you see the distinction? Because you are a good boy. You ran away because you're a good boy, and you're hurting now because you're a good boy. Got it?"

Oh, the other neatest thing on the After Hours show was when they asked what is actually happening when Mother shows up and Kerry Ehrin said another beautiful thing, which is that it appears to him in that form because he loves his mom so much. Like it's really that simple: When Norman can't do it, whatever it is she appears that way because that's his highest image of *comfort*. There is a stronger person living inside of him, and she handles what he can't.

I mean, I realize we're talking about things like reacting to sexual urges with intense violence and/or murdering dudes, but that's what we're dealing with: Even in that context, it's still such a compassionate way to look at the mechanism itself. We assemble the Gods we need from whatever parts we find lying around.

## **BRADLEY**

**Gil:** "You look dressed up like a grown-up. Why are you back at my house?"

**Bradley:** "You have to invite me in."

**Gil:** "You drink yet?"

**Bradley:** "Give me a break."

**Gil:** "You think about our little talk? You realize it was a quid pro quo? And also I am scamming you?"

At this point she goes full-on incandescent; it's a joy to watch. She toddles around with her drink, planting kisses on him and laying down thick tracks of dog-whistle code-words -- "It's not *easy* being a girl without a *daddy*, you know? I just need someone to *explain* things to me" -- and he eats it up, of course. (*Loaded for bear*, my notes say at this point, without even a hint of irony.) She gets him on the couch, straddles him and tries to get a straight answer: Everybody's a Picasso. Even the dead ones.

"I heard my dad was sleeping with Blaire Watson, and I need to know more about my dad, because I don't think I ever really knew him..." He takes off her jacket, and they start unbuttoning his shirt. "Was Blaire Watson sleeping with anyone else? Someone who might have been jealous?"

Down to the buckle, she whips the belt off amazingly, and he's fully engaged in the blowjob that's about to happen (and obviously with zero plans on holding up his end of any of this) when she pulls out the gun, aims it at his forehead, and then -- surprising them both; surprising neither of them -- blows his fucking head off without another word. All the walls in Gil's beautiful house are glass, so it makes a real picture. Attagirl. Gil, you were awful. You weren't Zach Shelby complicated awful or even Jake Abernathy banal awful, but you were pretty bad. Rest in lots of pieces.

## **NORMAN**

Is asleep as the camera goes *chung chung chung* closer and closer to him, and when he finally wakes up, he's just kind of happy to see her, standing there in the dark. Asking if he really meant it, that he'd be there for her no matter what.

## **NEXT WEEK**

Norma decides that what Norman really needs is more personalities and voices in his head, so she sends him out for the school play. Bradley's on some kind of the lam. Romero is now solving -- or avoiding -- murders on every side of the WPB political situation. And Dylan? Well I certainly *hope* he just got a promotion.

## **Shadow of a Doubt, 202**

### **"Lady Peaceful, Lady Happy"**

#### **PREVIOUSLY**

Maybe Miss Watson was going to molest him or maybe she just was being nice, but either way her ass is dead now and Norman Bates is *on the case*. Having solved her own little murder mystery -- or so she thinks -- the incandescent Bradley Martin has nowhere to run but Norman Bates's basement, so now he has *two* problems.\*

\*(Norman Bates has at least one million problems.)

#### **AM**

The taxidermy animals down in the basement have been posed to look like they're having a party! Or else they were having a party last night and forgot to get their shit together before the humans woke up.

Bradley's asleep on a hasty pallet near the boiler, looking like an angel, when Norman finally shakes her awake. She moves fast, talks fast, but her eyes take a second to focus; her mouth hangs open, she is ragged.

Bradley: "Yeah so listen I need you to do the following eighty things..."

Norman: "No way. You need to tell me what's going on. Every time I keep a ratchet tore-up girl as a pet my mom yells at me. Also, we are in the middle of a love story and you don't know it yet, so I need the deets."

Bradley: "I am not interested in your mess. I am interested in a bus ticket to anywhere, some money, some food, some..."

Norman: "I don't think you realize how awkward this is for me! You have to explain the stakes so that I

won't trip on the weirdness of keeping a girl under my mom's roof."

Bradley: "Okay you know what? Fine. I killed a man. I think he killed my dad, probably he did, but either way it was a squid-blessed mess with brains *everywhere*."

Norman: "Oh my God we have so much in common! This is *crazy*."

OB/GYN

Staring down at Norma staring up at us, on a doctor's table. A clicking sound, which majorly tripped me out. I was like, "Wait, is that a speculum down there? Speculums *also make a clicking sound*? They literally do *everything* you don't want to happen." I don't know why, but the clicking noise just sent me over the edge.

Doc: "What kind of birth control are you using?"

Norma: "Ever since my sons murdered my sex slave-owning boyfriend? Mostly my personality."

Doc: "Do you have any unrelated questions to ask me while I do this?"

Norma: "Tell me about blackouts. Like, into trances, and with lost time."

Doc: "Oh, I didn't realize you were *that* kind of crazy."

Norma: "It's my sister. We've done CAT scans and everything, no physical..."

Doc: "Oh, your 'sister'?"

Norma: "Those scare quotes are actually appropriate, but not for the reasons you think."

Doc: "Okay if there's no physical evidence, why are you asking me? A doctor?"

Norma: "Just spit balling here, lady. What could cause blackouts, if there's nothing physically wrong with you?"

Doc: "Descartes would suggest if it's not one thing, it's your mother. Uh, I mean The Other. Uh, I mean the *Mind*. Can I refer you to a psychiatrist?"

Norma: "No. She doesn't live here, and anyway I was hoping it was some third thing."

Doc: "Some third thing that is not your mind or your body?"

Norma, resigned: "Yeah, or my fault.\* So I guess a fourth thing."

TURNER

Remo figures out pretty fast that all the cops around Gil's awesome gorgeous perfect house are an explanation for why Gil's not answering his phone.

Remo: "So we just keep driving, obviously."

Dylan: "Why? We didn't do anything wrong and I want to know what's up!"

Remo: "What's up is, drug war and the cops are hard pressed to... Oh, great."

Romero: "-- Mornin' boys."

Dylan: "Oh nothing, we just wanted to see Gil."

Romero: "See that body on that gurney in a body bag? Say hello. Only you can't, because he doesn't even have a face on his head. Can you tell me anything about anything at all? I do actually have to investigate this murder, you know."

Dylan: "I can tell you only that he will be moderately missed. And that this is so crazy!"

Romero: "Come on, Massett. This is a drug war about to happen. Do me the respect of acknowledging where we live and that I am the only person who even kind of has a handle on anything."

Dylan: "Oh right, I forgot. You're not a regular cop, you're a cool cop."

Romero: "What I am is a cop that looks the other way when you motherfuckers set each other on fire, because it makes for less paperwork. Trust me, I'm on your side. If only because you are a citizen. Unless you killed this gross bastard, in which case I will sadly have to buy you a beer and then arrest you for murder."

## LIBRARY

Homegirl is checking out a bunch of books with what I can only assume is her own library card: Dissociative amnesia, epilepsy, psychosis; titles like *Coping*\* and *Call Me Crazy*. Exactly what the cops will notice when Norman finally melts down, exactly the list they will be looking for. But good God, what a solid swing for old Norma. Read up and diagnose him yourself, because no *way* can you go in for the talking cure again, not with the body count what it is.

Not with Miss Watson dead, like she is. It's only a whisper, she isn't even allowed to think it yet, but it's there. Read fast.

\*(And start with that one, babe.)

Norma's eyes fall on a mother and son -- visually similar enough that it's intentional -- delighting in each others company. She praises his reading, and he falls into her side with pleasure, enraptured. And nearby, on the wall, there's a call for auditions for the local community theater's production of *South Pacific*. An idea begins to form behind those whirling eyes. An awful, wonderful idea.

## GIL

The drug place, I never know what to call it. The Giant Boat Place. I love that big old boat. Where can it take you? Anyplace gross.

Remo: "Now, you haven't been in the business long enough to even understand the implications..."

Dylan: "Okay, *Dad*."

(Nobody: *Knows what to do with that.*)

Remo: "Shut up and listen. Romero was right, this is a declaration of war."

Dylan: "It was the other guys."

Remo: "Yeah. I mean, we've been stealing their business so clearly something bad was going to happen..."

Dylan: "We what?"

Remo: "But anyway, we're getting a new Gil today. His problem. Just bear in mind that fair Verona is fixin' to heat right up."

## CEMETERY

The man that Norman spied on, the poor sad mustache man that killed everybody on *Grey's Anatomy* at that time of year where everybody dies on *Grey's Anatomy*, is Nick. Nick Ford, who is Miss Watson's father, and obviously Romero knew that when Norman showed him the photo of him. Which I guess was to protect Norman, since the *other* thing Norman was doing at that time was photographing the head of one of the main drug cartels in the region, just as a drug was heating up, which is why you should not take pictures of people without their consent. Especially in quaint PNW villages where drugs are the main thing\*.

Nick: "I still can't believe my whore daughter got her throat slit."

Romero: "It's sad but did you kill her boyfriend? Just curious."

Nick: "And start a drug war? Why would I do that? Go find her murderer and get off my jock. It's been four months!"

Romero: "As much as I hate to be a part of this casual slut-shaming of this woman who was apparently deeply fucked up and the town bicycle and possibly a child molester, can we be real for a second?"

\*(All of them.)

Nick: "If a *guy* fucked every guy in town, we'd think he was a hero!"

Romero: "Well, no. We'd be even worse about it. That's kind of what Norma Bates is always bitching about. When you're tone-deaf or naïve enough to think men and women are interchangeable, you end up with bullshit like Men's Rights and the PC police. Shit only slides *downhill*. We're the lucky 39% who never have to account for men's egos as part of daily life, for our survival and our actual image of ourselves as people."

Nick: "I think of the police department as almost a third drug family. Checks and balances. And until pot laws change in this country, that's going to involve a fair amount of dirtiness to keep balanced and checked."

Romero: "Such is the cost of our idyllic paradise, where everybody is a sex murderer and gets set on fire, when they're not raping each other all the time."

## LUNCH

Norma: "Sister, you are awfully chill going to town on those carrots like that. Are you sure nothing is wrong? Like you are killing people for example?"

Norman: "I like nothing better than when you watch me masticate, Mother."

Norma: "Okay so you wanna do a musical? WPB has a community theater, a rich cultural sort of uh... They're doing *South Pacific* this summer, and..."

Norman: "Here we go. I always knew this day would come. I am not like that!"

Norma: "In my version of reality, which always wins, you are absolutely into musicals. We sing together all the time, we are like a two-person The Partridge Family."

Norman: "Nobody knows who those people are, *Mother!* Nobody knows what you're talking about, *Mother!*"

Well, he's in a mood. So Norma (never let it be said Norma Bates is afraid of doubling the fuck down) responds by singing and dancing to "I'm A Little Teapot," including a verse where she just clucks and stomps her feet. It is astonishing. You forget how she is and then she so kindly reminds you how she is. I could watch this all day.

Norman: "Compose yourself!"

Norma: "I really, really need this. I am prepared to take this *all the way*."

Norman: "You're acting like I still need a new hobby. I'll have you know I haven't been down to the basement for days! Except for a secret reason."

Bradley's mom calls then, to ask where her daughter is because she was only home for one night -- jamming pistols in her mouth, if you'll recall, even then -- and suddenly has disappeared. Is she off another, higher or more deadly, bridge? Did she shoot a drug lord? Is she in their basement? No, no and no. He rings off and Dylan walks in, listening a bit.

Norma: "Who was that? And is it going to be a long conversation because I would really like to revisit the..."

Norman: "Bradley disappeared again?"

Dylan: "I could almost figure this out right now, but I'm too hungry to pay attention."

Everybody chills, and somehow Norma has won the fight about the musical, and is therefore so manic and twirly all you can really focus on is Norman. He is going to town on his lunch in a way he seldom does, staring into space and worrying himself into an ulcer like he always, always does.

Dylan's always so sensitive to that; I like to think that this -- rather than the fact that Dylan has been conspiring with Bradley since last season to this exact end -- is what finally tips him off to what's going on, if not where.

## UPSTAIRS

In a comically dark, dramatically lit room, Norman packs a bug-out bag for her and then shoves it, all gangly, under the bed at Dylan's knock. The light and the difference in position makes Dylan tower over him, like an authority, like a man, which is maybe why Norman clams up so hard. But I know that's not it:

This is a love story about Norman and Bradley -- he's the Ali McGraw to her Steve McQueen\* -- and that is the number one story Dylan can never be a part of.

Dylan: "You must be really worried about her. I'm only the appropriate amount."

Norman: "What is especially worrisome to me is how I have no idea where she is located."

Dylan: "That's weird that you underlined that like that, buddy. Anything to say?"

Norman: "Nothing but reiterations at this point."

Dylan: "Okay because it's fucking scary out there. Her dad was part of my world, not yours. She's walking into that wood chipper with her eyes open. So if you need me..."

Norman: "I'm going to look you in the eye and lie to you, is how important this is to me that I do it."

Dylan: "Bummer but okay. Man, I love you."

\*("Nobody knows who those people are, *Jacob*! Nobody knows what you're talking about, *Jacob*!")

Norman: "Dylan? Try this one on. What if she's already dead? Suicide accomplished?"

Dylan: "I sure hope that's not it, weirdo. But points for selling it."

Norman: "Well done, Norman Bates. Plantin' those seeds, watchin' 'em grow."

## GROCERY STORE

Norman awkwardly moves around the store, lingering too long in the girl aisle looking for hair dye, getting a look from a woman -- he's not *there* yet, lady -- and making for the registers. There, he can't take his eyes off the missing posters for Bradley, everywhere you look. (My notes at this point say, "Register girl is, frankly, amazing," well before she appeared in the credits for next week, so that's double good news she's real, because you should not waste this actress, Paloma Kwiatkowski\*.)

Register: "Are you... Hello?"

Norman: "Sorry. Weird day. Weird week. Weird life."

Register: "Here for the summer?"

Norman: "I'm a townie, but not like to the degree that you are one. Have you really never noticed me before? Normally people are mesmerized instantly by me."

Register: "No, I am, I just..."

Norman: "Well, I've been here. Not in this grocery store, but in this town."

Register: "Okay, so you're weird. Awesome. Is this your hair dye?"

Norman: "No, it's for a lady. That is my mother. I call her Mother."

Register: "Errands for mom. You're a dying breed, fellow quirky outcast."

Norman: "Aren't we all? Dying. Because you're born and then you..."

Register: "I wish I wasn't at work right now because you are a fucking trip."

Norman: "Okay bye."

\*(Her name's gonna be Cody Brennan. Once again, even the girls in the tortured concrete world carry names of men.)

## BOATWORLD

Remo has his whole list of best New Gils picked out, from Trace down to Becker to who else could it possibly be? Whoever it is, they're a half-hour late. Dylan stares out the window between *the pot*, and spots a person who is super gross and has tragic hair and is named Zane. Zane is ten miles of trashy bullshit but I mean, who were you expecting? We lucked out with Remo to begin with.

Remo: "Zane? Oh, gross."

Dylan: "Why is..."

Zane: "-- Hey I'm Zane, I'm tragic, my hair looks like a stupid movie about future homeless people that are addicted to virtual reality drugs, I drive a dumb muscle car and my whole life is a performance that I think I am pulling off."

Dylan: "Cool. I'm Dylan and this is just a job so we don't have to be friends. Or even really get to know

each other."

Zane: "Here's how I see it, this is all Gil's fault for getting murdered, and the only way we can fix it is with more and more murders. Like in *Eumenides* or *Romeo & Juliet*, where violence solves everything."

Dylan: "Wait, that's the opposite of the..."

Zane: "Good thing I can't read, huh?"

Remo: "Oh my God. What even is my life."

WPBPD

Romero is called to an apartment complex where we find one of my favorite Vancouver Bingo guys, **Brendan Fletcher**, smoking a bong until the cops arrive and then flushing what seems like a lot of weed to me, then running around all tense around the drugs even though they are there for him killing a lady, which makes me think he did not kill the lady.

Who killed the lady? I don't know. I hope not Norman, but you never know. Who killed Jerry Martin? Almost certainly not Gil Turner, right? This town is so funny like that!

Romero finally gets him -- Kyle -- on his face in the sad backyard strip-of-grass, and I guess now we have a suspect for Miss Watson's murder. And as we'll see, that would be okay even if he didn't do it, because this Kyle, he is a piece of work.

THE HOUSE

I don't remember the events exactly, but Norman and I think Emma came across a lot of Keith Summers/Jake Abernathy's cash money last year and I guess they hid it in the attic (?). I know it figured into how Norma eventually got Romero to kill Abernathy, and so then I guess she came back home with the duffle bag of money? Anyway there's money, and Bradley needs money, so here we are.

Downstairs, Norma hops up seven or so steps toward the attic, then back down again. She is wearing the most amazing black polka-dotted dress, with yellow trim and Peter Pan collar, and her hair is up in a kerchief, and she looks amazing. She *looks* like a Sixties stage musical. Gah. And her hair this season. What a woman she is.

Anyway, Norma heads down toward the basement -- the music going *oh shit* for, think about it, *two* reasons -- and narrowly misses Bradley hiding from her. There's a bit of cat-and-mouse where Norma wanders around, weirded out by her weird son's weird things, and Bradley thinks Norma is going to catch her and send her home and/or to jail, and so it's suspense basically without peril, which is a fun kind sometimes.

Norman: "Hey what's up why are you down here? Come upstairs and be there instead!"

Norma: "Cool because I downloaded some sheet music, let's sing songs together."

Norman: "You downloaded... You mean you printed it? What are you ever talking about. Okay, fine, get out of the basement."

Norma: "Worried about singing in front of your stuffed animals?"



They go upstairs and Bradley breathes, and then Norma sits down at the piano that is in tune and she's coy, and vulnerable, and eventually he joins in. I can't *stand* to see people sing, it makes me really nervous. It's like you walk in on somebody naked that you weren't planning to see naked, and they're like, holding your gaze, daring you to see them naked, in this very brave, very aggressive, very beautiful way, and it just sends all of my senses into overload.\* The only thing worse to me is when somebody laughs until they cry. It makes me want to Kool-Aid Man away through the wall when people do that.

But sometimes, if you love the person *very* much -- like how much I love Norman Bates, which is more than most things -- then it's okay. You can stand your ground.

\*(I already *know* everybody's a Picasso, I don't need to see it. That much knowing all at once could split you right open.)

Anyway, they sing "Mister Sandman," and Bradley's down on the steps listening hungrily and going more and more out of her mind from what I can tell. Eventually they collapse in Motherboy giggles and are as innocent as ten years before any of this happened, for a second, and he's like, "Fine."

Norman: "I will go make an ass out of myself for your sake, Mother."

Mother: "Yeah, I know. I mean, thanks. I mean, great!"

#### WPBPD INTERROGATION RM

Okay the whole thing with Kyle is so unsavory and he's so convinced of his innocence and so blasé about the rest of his litany of crimes that it's just gross. I will give you the facts and we will move right along.

Within thirty hours of her death, the very busy Miss Blaire Watson found time between chaperoning a dance and trying to molest a boy to have sex with at least two men, going by the semen samples, one of which is Kyle's. Who in his time has sold tainted drugs that killed at least three people, and also he murdered his old girlfriend Carly Walters, and left her -- Romero says poetically -- "floating face-down out in the kelp beds," which is one reason Romero and Kyle are so intimate. Anyway, Kyle's sole response/alibi is that Miss Watson was fucked up and had daddy issues and was "troubled," and... sometimes I guess you die from that?\* Kind of like the Twinkie Defense, only with hundreds maybe thousands of dicks.

\*(Just kidding, all it really means is that you're not important enough for it to matter how you died. It flattens everything out, asymptotically, when you're a big old whore like Miss Blaire Ford Watson, of the White Pine Bay Drug Cartel Fords.)

*She had sex, dot dot dot, she died. Any questions?*

#### BASEMENT

Wearing the adorable coveralls he uses to keep the blood off his pristine clothing, Norman puts enough precision and detail into dyeing Bradley's hair for her that it could very well be the most carefully dyed hair in the world.

Bradley: "Is it all out?"

Norman: "It seems to be. The water's running clear."

They dry her off and run through their big romantic plan: Leave at 8 for Cold Creek, up the coast, where a Boston-bound bus will pick her up at 10:30 and then she's gone forever, dead and gone and free.

Bradley: "Wait, you can suddenly drive?"

Norman: "Babe, I do what I want. Mother can't tell me what to do. Not tonight.\*"

She thanks him, stepping close. Not because of the sex they had, or the feelings he's still got for her, but because she was the first person in town to fall under his spell.

"I always knew there was something special about you," she says, "Something different. I wasn't wrong."

She's young enough -- they're both young enough -- that even telling him this doesn't quite feel like *aquid pro quo*, or a manipulation. It passes the sniff test. There was always something special about her too.

\*("Please do not tell Mother I said that.")

REMO

Is rocking quite a large belt buckle, futzing around the scene pulling weeds apart, hair perfect as usual. Zane drives up in his stupid car with his stupid hair and just...

Remo: "Zane? Is a lame-ass poser. He thinks life is *Scarface*. The Big Boss is his brother. Classic guy who shouldn't be in the business, but is."

Dylan: "He does sound horrible. You said he was in prison? Was it something awful?"

Remo: "More masculinity posturing, what else? He was taking a shipment to our Vegas distributors and got clocked doing 95."

Dylan: "Why would you speed with drugs in your car?"

Remo: "That's our friend fuckin' Zane, in a nutshell. When I think about it I almost understand how your mom feels all the time. Being under the control of an asshole simply by the accident of his birth, and knowing you can't do shit about it."

Dylan: "You're in physical danger the second you ask the question. And that's your whole life. And meanwhile the guy in question is so safe in the world he gets to spend all *his* energy impressing other guys *that only exist in his head*."

Remo: "Plus he looks like a slightly less gross Ethan Hawke."

Zane opens the trunk of his stupid penis car and out pops a fairly tragic young fella named Johnny B, who works for the Ford Family, as in Nick Ford, and then after about one second of asking Johnny B about Gil's murder, which the Ford family did not do, he pulls out a gun and shoots Johnny B in the head and that's the end of Johnny B. I cannot relate to you how quickly this all happens or how much Zane hated the few middle seconds of narrative that he had to wait, before the shot. How happy all this makes him.

"Wrap him up in the tarp and drop him off in front of Nick Ford's house."

## HIS ROOM

Norma's making his bed when Miss Watson's pearls drop out from under the mattress, along with her obituary. His two totems. She barely takes a second to think before slipping them back under there and keeps it up for a second; after one hospital corner, she leans against the foot of the bed, silently. It's not an abstraction anymore, now. Whatever it is.

Worst case scenario, she thinks, they're trophies. But we know better. No version of Norman works like that, now or in the far-flung future: He doesn't keep things to gloat, he keeps them to honor; burial is betrayal. And this, we know and Norma doesn't, go beyond that: They're more like a rosary, because he let her die. Because caught between one kind of shame and another, he left someone kind and soft in the darkness.

## AUDITIONS

Norma leads him by the hand, skipping, dancing, to a large stage. This shit is very professional that they have in WPB. And best of all, they have Christine Heldens. If you don't know the actress yet, Rebecca Creskoff, trust me that she is the best thing in the world. Her character on *Hung*, Lenore, was the standout of the show every single year, and one of those deals where it's impossible to imagine her played properly by anybody else. You know how much I hate camp and all that, so operatic bitches are a tough needle to thread anyway -- just ask Norma how rarely it works for me -- but I cannot stress how much she brought to it. What a lovely mix they will be.

Anyway, Norma's giggling to herself and so into this moment of being backstage (everybody being creative, doing their own thing instead of trying to constantly obstruct or suppress her) that she almost forgets to monitor Norman's entire life and body signs at all times as though it is her own.

Norma: "I'm Norma Bates, and I am *here to audition!*"

Norman: "There are fucking a million people here. We should leave."

Norma: "Great to meet ya!"

Norman: "I need to go at eight for reasons that are not important."

Norma: "Honey this place is great! Maybe we'll *never* leave!"

Norman: "How are you so happy right now? This is like if the taxidermy animals really did come to life, and dance up on you."

Norma: "These are our people! We are boho, we have a motel, but we're also middle-class because we're business owners! That's theater people, right in that sweet spot."

Norman: "Are you somehow unaware the stage calls to the most insecure, self-centered people on the fucking planet? Did you know the second you pull your bipolar shit on them they're gonna circle you like a parliament of rooks and peck your eyes out? Do you really think being a narcissist *among narcissists* is going to make you happy?"

Norma: "I kind of feel like it's going to!"

Norman: "Fine. Maybe this time."

She stares at him in that deep way, begging him to be present for this or else she will die, and he takes her hand, nodding indulgently. Back home, Bradley packs up in the basement, being all sad and lonesome, and the whole time he's getting antsy and antsy, and it's closer and closer to eight, and finally he lies that he's got a movie date with Emma, and that doesn't work either, and finally he just flails out of the room entirely. And Norma takes off after him -- engaging in drama/hating the drama, embarrassed/unembarrassed -- faster than we've seen her move since the time she ran around the entire car, and just as hilarious toward the end. Sister can *hustle*.

#### OUTSIDE

By the time they're outside, this is solely about Norma. She finally found a world, an oasis within the world, that was thriving in creativity and art that was calling to her and he's making her an asshole, embarrassing her. Norman does not do that math correctly.

Norman: "I don't care how it looks, Mother! I don't want to be here! I don't want to do this! It's stupid! You just get these ideas in your head, and everyone's supposed to want to do them, and you get hurt if we don't! Now all of a sudden it's community theater? Since when did you care about the theater? It's a stupid musical!"

Norma: "Before we walked in there, I wanted to do something fun with you. Like the mom and kid I saw at the..."

Norman: "Mother! We live together, yeah? We work together. We eat every meal together. We sleep *six inches away from each other*, with a *thin wall* between us. Don't you think that's probably enough?"

His nasty face, and the way his hands work the "six inches" part of the speech, are breathtaking. Even Norma is forced to take stock.

Norma: "...Oh, got it. I, okay, *I* want to protect you. This is about protecting you."

Norman: "Oh my God, from what?"

Norma: "Hmm. Okay. The night Miss Watson was killed, do you...? What do you remember, other than what you already told me?"

Norman: (*Shivers.*)

Norma: "Where did you get those pearls?"

He's Norman; he doesn't bother making excuses. Always this relief in disclosure; in closing the gap between himself and the part of himself that is her: They were in his pocket the next morning. He told her the whole story, dot dot dot, there were pearls. Norma breaks down in a terrifying way, and starts repeating, shaking herself apart with it: "I'm so scared. I'm so scared, I'm so scared, I'm so scared..."

He moves toward her like water, and half of her wants to pull away. But eventually he catches her, pulling her into his arms.

"Mother? Stop it. Please, stop it. You're being silly. Imagining silly things."

He confabulates a story for them both, a nonsense story about finding them somewhere at the dance and wanting to turn them in, and just forgetting. "You're getting all worked up over an idea about nothing." Without even hearing himself, or how skillfully she's done it, he tries to pilot her back into the theater, so they can do something fun together.

Norma: "I can't, Norman. I'm too upset!"

Norman: "Ugh, come on."

Norma: "And you're... You have to be somewhere..."

Norman: "All right, lady. Come on. You downloaded sheet music for this. We've prepared for this. We are going to do this together. It is going to solve the problem."

Norma: "Keep selling."

Norman, verbatim: "*It'll break my heart if we go home now. Okay?*"

Norma: "Well, okay. But only if you really want to."

But when she's gone, he's still got three women to care for. Miss Watson, who must be avenged, and Bradley, who must be saved, and Norma, who must be appeased. Whose pain hurts him worse than his own. He breathes, and immediately dials the phone. Norman really is being even more wonderful than usual this week.

"Hey. Dylan, I need you to listen to me, okay? You can't start asking a bunch of questions, because *time is of the essence*. I'm with Mom, and I can't get away, or I would do this myself. I lied to you, okay? I do know what happened to Bradley. She's hiding in our basement. And she's ready to be driven to Cold Creek to get on a bus that leaves in two hours, that'll take her to Boston, where she's going to start her life over."

Dylan: "Obviously I will do anything for you, but not until you explain why Bradley is in our basement. Please don't tell me she..."

Norman: "She killed the man that killed her father. Some guy Gil Turner. I think he worked in your business. Dylan? You there?"

Dylan: "Oh boy."

Norman: "You'll get her on that bus?"

Dylan: "...Yeah."

His softest voice; the tears that come out when he realizes he won't be there. That this won't be their story; that he's already said goodbye.

"Thank you, Dylan. And tell her I'm sorry? That I really wanted to be able to do this for her myself?"

That, he already knew. Dylan heads downstairs to get her, and she hops to without question. This is her story too. It's a beginning, because it has to be.

## MAYBE THIS TIME

Norman is suave, when Christine calls Norma down from the stands for her song; she can't let go of his hand, quite, as she heads down the stairs in her flats and hisses at the pianist that she forgot her sheet music. When he smiles, she sets her back straight, and goes for it.

"Maybe This Time" is automatically one of the saddest songs in the world. It's one of those songs that's a little too Broadway for me to understand it as a song, but I'm familiar enough that I started tearing up the second she started. Oh, *Norma*. It couldn't be anything else, could it? In the whole hard world.

*Maybe this time, I'll be lucky / Maybe this time he'll stay  
Maybe this time, for the first time / Love won't hurry away  
He will hold me fast / I'll be home at last  
Not a loser anymore / Like the last time, and the time before  
Everybody loves a winner / So nobody loved me  
Lady peaceful, Lady happy / That's what I long to be  
All the odds are, they're in my favor  
Something's bound to begin  
It's gotta happen, happen sometime  
Maybe this time... I'll win*

It is stunning, in multiple senses of the word. She breaks down toward the end, turning her face up like a sunflower; turning herself into something very bright, and very hopeful, like a fast-burning star. They are both crying, of course -- this is his theme too -- but his smile is proud and his eyes are prouder. The whole room is erupting in applause. They think she's acting: *Everybody loves a winner, so nobody loved me*.

I mean, my God. Sometimes I understand musicals for a second, and then it goes away again.

## KYLE

Romero comes to Kyle's cell, and plops down next to him on the bench. Keeps it short and sweet, and informs him he's been charged with the murder of Blaire Watson.

"You're a shit heel, Kyle, and if there were any justice you'd have been on Death Row a long time ago." And then he peaces, just like that. Kyle flips out, of course, since he didn't do it, but Romero's long gone.

## THE HILLSIDE CAFÉ

Is a bus station diner in Cold Creek. Dylan and Bradley share a last silent meal together, waiting for the bus. She is wearing a beanie and looks tore up. He's sorry for her, but glad to see her safe.

Dylan: "You know, it killed my brother that he couldn't be the one here. Doing this for you."

Bradley: "Of course it did."

Dylan pulls up a notebook and rips out some pages; she watches with interest until he starts talking.

Dylan: "I need you to... Write a suicide note. Okay? There's a really bad guy, so lost that he doesn't even *know* how bad he is, so bad that it rattled me more than anything that's happened so far, and he's looking for the person who killed Gil. You need to be *off* the map. I'm going to leave some of your clothes by the rocks at the beach, with your note. Do you need me to tell you what to write?"

Bradley: "I've been writing it my whole life. I got this."

Maybe this time, though. She was a favorite. Everybody on this whole show is so wonderful.

## BATES MOTEL

Emma runs up, breathing heavy, the second they pull in. It's around ten, meaning she closed up the office and waited for them, to save them a night of worry.

Emma: "They've, uh, arrested someone. For the murder of Miss Watson."

The response, from both of the Bates, is confusing. Norma gives him a look and they try to quickly do the math about how, or if, to celebrate this; as one they remember that Miss Watson was a beloved teacher who deserves justice, and they are allowed to be happy. Norma, of course, throws herself on Emma and overdoes it, earning a funny shrug over her shoulder at Norman. But he's happy too.

They are all three very beautiful by the lamplight at the bottom of the hill. He doesn't mince words, following his mother home on his old long-legs body; Emma waits to be a part of the story again, watches them go.

Emma: "Your mom's such a good person. She cares so much."

Norman: "She cares. A lot. Good night, Emma."

I hope that was the thaw and they can get back to their tricks. The fact that he plucked the movie-with-Emma thing out of the air makes me think that process is already underway, but I want to see it for sure. He heads upstairs, and waits on the porch for Dylan to come home.

Dylan sees Bradley onto the bus, and they stare, without waving, and she's gone. He drives back down the coast to White Pine Bay, parks that truck down the hill, and makes his way up, to where Norman's still sitting. His vigil is the best he can do, now.

He's happy to hear she's gone, and safe; Dylan watches his face for a moment before heading inside, and Norman reads her note.

*Norman: You are the best person I have ever known. Bradley.*

It's not even a shine-on: That would be literally true, wouldn't it. He needed a win today, and now he's got three. Miss Watson will be avenged, Bradley's safe, and Norma has found her joy in something other than him. So he allows himself a smile, and we pan up, and away, past even Norma's bedroom windows. Into white:

## CALEB

We don't see the guy's face for a while, but his name was in the credits so we know. He approaches an old dude, working under an elevated car, and asks directions to the Bates Motel, a few miles down the road.

Mechanic: "I was just there, though. No Vacancy sign was on."

The guy says he's not really looking for a room there, no matter how tired (or wired) he seems. He's just trying to find his sister, Norma Bates.

## NEXT WEEK

Dylan immediately gets a vibe off Caleb, I'd imagine, and tries to figure out what the deal is. This is, of course, the way to push all of Norma's buttons at once. That's the entire Perfect Storm right there.

Christine introduces Norma to Bay society, while Cody does the same. Cody's boyfriend is maybe a little too friendly, with poor old mesmerizing Norman, because outlaws have no rules. Norma meets Nick Ford somehow, which is interesting, and the bodies start piling up, which Romero's not going to love. Mostly I just want\* to know what the hell Caleb wants, and when he's apt to leave town.

\*(Bradley to come back immediately.)



## Caleb, 203

### "The Cloth Mother"

#### PREVIOUSLY

With very little information to go on, really, Bradley Martin killed the head of one of the two main drug crews in White Pine Bay, and Norman got Dylan's help to fake her death and send her off to Boston. A few months earlier, basically because she was unraveling but also to ruin a date that was already going to be ruined anyway, Norma told Norman -- because who could be better prepared to handle this information -- about her brother Caleb, who sexually abused her for her entire childhood, until he left home. Later that night, he almost got molested and possibly killed a drug lord's daughter. Four months later, that brother has arrived in town. But to what end?

#### KITCHEN

Emma lets herself in, and Norman offers her some breakfast cereal because he is a sweet kid who is enjoying his breakfast cereal, but she's got seriousness on her brain: Specifically, the discovery of missing teenager Bradley Martin's clothes and suicide note, on the front page.

Emma: "I'm so, so sorry!"

Norman: "It's no big deal. She was kind of DOA ever since her last suicide attempt, if I'm being totally honest."

Emma: "You don't want to break down crying in my arms?"

Norman: "Nah, I'm good."

Emma: "Because I am weirdly distraught. I hated her, but then after the last time I was sad for her, and then when she was missing I was worried and now she's really dead."

Norman: "Yeah, but what does that have to do with you?"

Emma: "Remember how obsessed I was with the dead Chinese sex slave? Because I have cystic fibrosis and every day is a fight to stay alive? Bradley Martin didn't have cystic fibrosis, or a heroin addiction, or any problems whatsoever. Besides that time her nearly dead father tried to run her over while he was on fire, I mean."

Norman: "Yeah but you weren't friends. In my version of reality, you were bitter romantic rivals."

Emma: "Right? That's why I came running up here, clunking my oxygen tank against every step, to see if you were okay. Now... about those hugs."

Norman: "I will let you know if I have any pretend feelings about this, I promise."

He asks Emma to leave the paper, for his growing pile of mementos, and she does. He's not acting entirely right, but he's not happy about it either. She is gone. And that's sad, even though it's empowering because he was the one that did it. He saved her -- this report is the official confirmation that he saved her. But she's still gone.

#### THEATRE

Norma is loose on the streets, which is never slash always good. She's very excited to see whether or not she got the lead in the town play, because she knows that she earned it, by singing her very sad song about her very real emotions. But as luck would have it, no. She did not make it into the play. She thinks about having a Norma wobbler right there on the sidewalk, but before she can make up her mind, tall red Christine Heldens comes running out of the theatre with a black marker in her hand and rage in her eyes.

Christine: "Norma Bates! I was gonna call you, I'm so sorry. These jerkoffs wouldn't let me give you the lead, so I fucking quit. Being the director is the point of being a director, and without you it's just a stupid lame-ass community musical. Middle-class politics are bullshit. I want to start a riot! Apparently Jocelyn Kirby is in charge of casting, not the director, and Jocelyn wants her friend Libby Porter over you, because she is an idiot, so fuck 'em. Here is a huge hug."

Norma: "This hug feels almost impossibly good. And nigh impossibly too long."

Christine: "Let me buy you a drink so we can start being best friends immediately."

Norma: "Um, it is eleven in the morning. And I'm kind of agoraphobic because it is 2014 out here and not 1958 like at my house."

Christine: "Fine, I will carry you bodily."

Norma: "I consent to being carried bodily to a bar! Having friends is overwhelming!"

What are we thinking? Vera Farmiga is a knockout and Norma clearly has the drama of ten normal people going on inside her, which are obviously charismatic qualities. And Christine Heldens is a bored housewife, in the strictest and least pejorative sense of that term, so maybe she's just moving onto a new project.

Or maybe -- and Norma knows this, on some level, because she screams it at the end of the episode -- blood calls to blood. Whatever is broken in Norma, maybe it is already having a conversation with what is broken in Christine, and neither of them hear it yet. Maybe it *sang*.

We rejoin them on their second martinis; Norma's face is beginning to remember what being a face is like. Making friends is like going on dates, but a whole lot harder.

Norma: "I mean, it's a lovely town. Small business-wise, I'm screwed. I'm starting to think that dating a deputy sheriff who ran sex slaves out of my motel and kept one in his own home, and who was later murdered on my front porch by my son, might be affecting me in social and economic ways I hadn't considered."

Christine: "Yeah, that was a huge fucking mess. I mean, I'm showing respect by not pretending I don't know all about that."

Norma: "Then you must be able to give me a read on how I'm perceived?"

Christine: "I am fabulously wealthy and bored all day, I have no idea why that would be important to you. I say fuck 'em. It's not like *you* were the one that kept sex slaves, or committed multiple homicides..."

Norma: "It is *certainly not* like that."

Christine: "So fuck 'em. Your main value is being interesting -- don't let them cow you out of that. I mean, without your macabre nightmare experiences why would I be showing you off? Oh, PS, I am going to

show you off. Besties!"

Norma: "Cool, until I inevitably attack you this is going to be really fun."

The music is like, "Isn't that sweet? *Or terrifying?* Oh, look how happy Norma is! *Definitely you should be worried about her.*"

## MOTEL

Dylan is overseeing the gardeners when Caleb finally comes around looking for Norma. Norma doesn't have a great track record with men -- moreso, vice versa -- and Dylan realizes this, and also that White Pine Bay is an unholy mess and when the man comes around, you should bark louder than you might feel like barking, because the Bates Motel is the second-softest place in town, after the house on the hill.

Dylan: "She ain't here. When she is here, I'm also here. There is no point at which you don't go through me. And I'm the *nice* son."

Caleb: "I don't really feel like discussing it with you. You look younger than you've ever looked on this show, though, so I will say that I am her brother."

Dylan: "Norma doesn't have a brother."

Caleb: "...Wait, because she said she didn't? Or because she didn't say she did? Either way that *isso Norma.*"

And because it is, either way, so Norma, Dylan takes the man up to the house on the hill. He's too old to say what he's really feeling, Molly Grue thoughts: How this boy waited forever and ever for a man, to teach him how to be a man. How finally he had to grow up without one.

But also how he keeps throwing himself again and again at the rocks of Norma's ambivalence, and approaching Norman from every angle he can think of, even his emotional negotiations with Remo and Remo's predecessor: That (for reasons we're only beginning to understand) this is a boy who was born without a home, who will die without a home, and who consequently can't see anything past the person in front of him, this person who says he is family, the one thing nobody would ever let Dylan have.

From the mid-1950s on, Dr. Harry Harlow performed hundreds of different sociological and psychological experiments on infant rhesus and macaque monkeys. He created inanimate mother-surrogates built of wire and wood, and the babies attached: The wire-and-wood face of each baby's mother was preferable to other mothers, more beautiful. And then he switched it up, to see what texture would do: The wire mother holds a bottle and the cloth mother none, or the cloth mother holds the food and the wire mother holds none. Even when the wire mother held the food, the macaques would use them only for it and then go back to the cloth mother.

She fed them in ways the wire mothers could not; they did not want to separate their young skin from her softness. She gave them a home base to explore from, to venture out and return if frightened, or tired, to soothe and to comfort. She was an illusion but one that worked. And without the cloth mother, they would shiver, paralyzed: In one set of tests they were confronted with robot bears, making horrible

noises guaranteed to terrify them. But with the cloth mother present, they could do battle, draw strength from her and go out to explore and to defeat. As long as they had somewhere to come back to.

But the babies raised only by the mothers of wire and wood, they grew up so sick inside they could barely digest their food.

#### KITCHEN

Returning from the grocery store, still a little giddy from her noontime treat with Christine, Norma is confronted first by the back and then the standing, arching, giant body of Caleb, grinning delightedly at her, while Dylan watches with a silent grin. After a few shakes, she hurls the groceries against the wall and physically, violently shoves Caleb all the way through the house: Out of the kitchen, through the parlor, down the hall to the foyer. Roaring -- not screaming, not shrieking; not hysterical -- at the top of her lungs. Scaring the men into complacency, into silence.

It's not wobbler mode, it's a Norma we haven't seen much. The kind who could kill the *crap* out of a man. The one that dreams of men invading the house on the hill.

Dylan: "Norma. What was that?"

Norma: "Don't ever let him back in here. *Ever.*"

#### PARLOR

Norma is vacuuming the floors when Norman finds her, later. She'll pass over that path a million times, until it feels clean; maybe now it never will. Maybe it's broken.

She realizes he's been talking to her, and asks him to repeat himself. He's asking about the play and she realizes she didn't tell him what happened with the play.

Norman: "Did we not get parts?"

Norma: "I didn't, no. You did, you're in the chorus. Do you want to be in chorus?"

Norman: "I didn't even want to do it in the first place, so..."

Norma: "And you were right."

She starts vacuuming again, more distracted than she has been all summer and he summons up the courage to ask her what's wrong. When she says his name, it's a punch to his gut. They'll take everything from you, if you let them, so you have to fight.

Norma: "Just out of nowhere, he just showed up. I threw him out."

Norman: "How did he find us?"

Those goddamn computers, probably. She notices him, shivering, paralyzed, and realizes she shouldn't have told him. Any of it. Now it's just another burden, which invalidates the entire plan. He should have a safe place to return to, a home base from which to explore. As long as he always comes back.

"It's nothing. It's not important. He's gone, so forget about it. I'm fine."

But she almost slaps him when he tries to touch her, nonetheless.

#### THE FIELDS

Remo and Dylan are discussing Zane's latest douche move -- killing Johnny B, of the Ford family -- when Dylan sees the vultures overhead, circling the guard tent. Paco and Tony have been lying there, dead, for a while. Zane never really had anybody to explain it to him either. And now he's running things.

#### BACKSTAGE

Norman heads over to report that he's dropping out of the chorus, so nobody will worry or suffer for it, and runs into Cody from the grocery store.

Cody: "How'd the hair dye turn out? How'd that work, anyway? Your mom's a blonde."

Norman: "Fine. I mean, I got the wrong color."

Cody: "Chorus, huh?"

Norman: "Actually I'm dropping out."

Cody: "How come you're quitting, Quitter? Because your Mom didn't get in? Because she totally should have."

Norman: "Just not into it."

Cody: "Can't do it without her? Or... I mean, yeah. Lame. Musicals are ass. You should be on Tech -- it's fun as shit. Painting, lifting, practical things. You get ripped. You should do it."

Norman: "Why?"

Cody: "I mean, I just told you why. Plus it's WPB in the summer. Options limited."

He's used to people coming on this strong, of course; it's a defining characteristic. But only certain kinds of broken people -- Emma, Bradley, Miss Watson -- speak to what's broken in him. This girl Cody, she *sings*.

#### MAIN ST

Dylan runs into Caleb again, picking up stuff (lime?) for Paco and Tony's dead corpse bodies, and it's awkward because of Norma going ham.

Caleb: "Okay to be fair I kind of figured it would be something like that."

Dylan: "Because that's her response to basically everything? Or because she has beef with you of a legitimate nature?"

Caleb: "I mean, that's the rub, isn't it. When you come home or into family's orbit, it doesn't really matter what happened or didn't happen. Just that you feel exactly like you are back there, in the nightmare."

Dylan: "So you're just not going to tell me what it was about either. Got it."

Caleb: "I am just about as pathetic and desperate as possible, if you would like to go fishing with me like some kind of perfect uncle (or Deputy) fantasy you never knew you had? I'm stuck here until Tuesday or until you love me."

Dylan: "I have to go bury some drug dealers right now, but maybe we could get dinner?"

## MOTEL OFC

Norma: "Stop asking me if I'm all right. Every time you do that I am pulled back up there, when what I want is to be down here, in my thriving small business that I own."

Norman: "Okay. But you should probably yell at me again when you want me to start caring. I wish that you had gotten cast in the play, because you deserved to be. It was originally about us working together on something..."

Norma: "You wouldn't fucking dare. You're telling me you suddenly yearn to be a chorus boy? Outrageous."

Norman: "No, Tech. Painting, lifting, practical things. Physical fitness, learn a skill..."

Norma: "Overdetermined, stop there. You suddenly like building things?"

Norman: "Sure. Taxidermy is just rebuilding things you take apart first."

Norma: "Fine, yeah. This all started because I wouldn't get off your back about this exact thing you are now doing, so okay. Never let it be said that I let my own interests and passions overshadow yours, except in the frequent cases where I do."

Emma: "Hey guys. I brought flowers for this casual memorial thing I want to have at the beach. Bonfire, flowers. People saying nice things about her, if they can think of any."

Norma: "Emma, I think that's lovely. Very meaningful."

For some reason that wording cracked me up. Also, is it? Norma thinks about having a moment about this, but then the phone rings.

Christine: "Norma Bates, get pretty. I'm having a garden party. It's your coming out."

Norma: "I am working. Also I am very afraid of the world."

Christine: "Good thing I don't care. You're coming."

Norma, delighted: "Am I?"

Christine: "Three o'clock. Your life begins today."

## ZANE

Drives up in his stupid car with his stupid music to say some stupid things.

Zane: "What is the meaning of this? Paco and Tony. Am I to presume this is payback for me kidnapping one of their youngest workers at random and killing him for no reason?"

Dylan: "That would be my guess, yeah."

Zane: "Then what shall we do?"

Dylan: "Verona again. You started a war and now they are continuing the war and you are going to escalate it for what? Bradley Martin is dead so she can't even tell you to stop. This is a zero-sum game with no winners, and you're doing it for no reason, and I can't tell you that, and I can't think fast enough to stop you some other way. Maybe we should just forget it and concentrate on being the best drug dealers we can be."

Zane: "Maybe! But also I have a confused idea about what that means, among other things. So I am going to slaughter lots of them. Okay bye!"

That went well. It's sick because Dylan knows more than Zane, but we know more than Dylan: He thinks he's covering for Bradley and for himself for pointing her at Gil, but really he's obscuring the facts of Miss Watson's murder, too, which won't be solved because Romero's used it to get an unrelated bad guy. It's pointless because everybody's on the same side, but I guess that's true of every war. It's a zero-sum game on such a scale not even wise Dylan can see all the players or the angles, which means the tragedy redounds to a much higher level of complexity than just Zane being gross. (Unless Zane killed Miss Watson, in which case the entire thing actually is his fault.)

Dylan and Remo head back to the fields to bury the bodies of Paco and Tony.

Dylan: "It's like when a chick asks you which dress and you pick the blue one and then they put on the green one. Like, why did you even ask? I can't figure out what that guy wants from me like *at all*."

Remo: "He's been our boss for less than a week and we're burying a couple of..."

Dylan: "Now I don't know what *you* want from me. You are telling me to be alarmed about this idiot being our boss and getting us killed, and trust me I'm alarmed all right, but that's not a conversation, that's a complaint. What am I supposed to do about it?"

Remo: "I don't know. I guess I am just flipping out."

Dylan: "Do it more quietly, then."

Remo: "Fine. God."

#### UPSTAIRS

Dylan finds Norma trying on dresses in front of the mirror for her garden party: A gorgeous red number that unfortunately rides up a little high, exposing the scar on her thigh from before he was born. Maybe in winter you could cover it with tights, but this is the summer, so it's a no-go. It's been itching all day.

Norma: "You look filthy. Take off your clothes and leave them by the door, I'll wash them first thing tomorrow."

Dylan: "That's oddly kind of you. Oddly buoyant, overall. It gives me courage to say..."

Norma: "Oh God, what? My life starts today. Don't drag me back to..."

Dylan: "I just feel bad. I'm sorry I brought him here. And I didn't get the chance to circle back and say that, as part of my ongoing due diligence to have a place in this family..."

Norma: "I just offered to do your laundry. Take what you're given."

Dylan: "You too. Let me help. I want to understand what happened. I was there and I feel responsible but I don't know anything about it except that it was awful."

Norma: "I barely remember what you're talking about."

Dylan: "That's so Norma Bates. You always pretend you don't understand anything I'm saying. It used to drive me nuts, like suddenly I was jealous of Norman getting something I never wanted in the first place. But now it just freaks me out, Norma."

Norma: "Well, don't trouble yourself."

Dylan: "*What the fuck happened?*"

Norma: "I have a party to attend. You wanna worry about somebody's brother, worry about your own. He needs a ride to the beach."

Dylan slams the door on the way out, but really she already did that. On first view she's being exactly the cagey beast he says she's being: We knew bringing Dylan -- already a sort of prisoner of war in the house, already half a traitor by being a man -- into the Caleb stuff was going to rip her to pieces. We knew she would avoid his questions; feel them pressing in on her unto claustrophobia and inevitable meltdowns. What we didn't, arguably *couldn't* know -- although it's on its way, coming up like vomit, even now -- is that it is less about pushing Norma's buttons this time, and a whole lot more about asking questions she would rather die -- or kill -- than answer.

## HELDENS

Norma's gone with a pretty black-and-white sun dress and a beautiful pink shawl, ever so slightly askew. She looks like a million bucks. Mrs. Helden's gigantic place is hardcore International Style, almost too far for me but with that van der Rohe travertine everywhere that I love, with a glass water wall inside and several stories, and a private dock and a giant sculpture out back. Very Christine, altogether. Piano in the living space.

Christine runs over and basically picks Norma up, romping around and getting peach martinis down her neck, gentling her like a horse: "I'm only gonna introduce you to people that I would really want to talk to. You look very pretty. Let's do this thing."

Back balcony, she introduces Norma -- "Excuse me, everyone! I'm barging in!" -- to a total of five people: Two women, a couple and a guy named George.

Christine: "This is Norma Bates! She just moved here! Make her feel welcome!"

Mr. Heldens: (*Whispers cutely in his wife's ear.*)

Christine: "This is my husband Peter, we're out of tonic water, be back in a sec."

They diligently try to make conversation as instructed, and Norma flounders for a bit before remembering that she is a hilarious train wreck, and before you know it she's informing the other guests -- dramatically, charmingly -- that most Grand Canyon deaths are the result of people *pretending* to fall into the Grand Canyon and then actually falling into the Grand Canyon.

Norma Bates's impression of someone falling brutally toward death, I mean to say, cracks everybody up.

## BONFIRE

As usual, he looks about ten years younger and a foot smaller than everybody else, no matter how tall he is.

Norman: "This just seems like a beer bust. Did I miss the memorial part?"

Emma: "Not really, Norman. It turns out what I have done is throw a party. An excuse to pound beers. But hey, look at this bonfire and all these sweet notes and pictures and things."

Norman: "You really tried, Emma. I'm sorry it didn't..."

Emma: "Meh. I was being an asshole. I thought maybe if I did this I would like her more. But she's dead, and I still don't."



Norman's impressed; Emma stomps away with her tank and Cody appears, in a red leather jacket. Her makeup is kind of a night look but that's fine. It'll be nighttime soon.

Cody: "Hey. You're here."

Norman: "Did you know Bradley?"

Cody: "Who? I'm just here for beer."

She figures out Norman *did* know the dead girl, and throws her arms around him, spontaneously comforting. It's nice. It feels nice. Her friend Philip approaches, a good-looking cocky type, who vibes at Norman in a way he is never going to understand without somebody explaining it to him -- and which he's not even looking for, because all he sees is that Bradley is gone and apparently Cody has a boyfriend -- and she tows the boys away to find the beer.

#### A VERY DARK WATERFRONT BAR

Caleb is explaining their family, in fits and starts: The alcoholic grandfather, on disability from the tire factory. The grandmother, depressive or bipolar Frannie, who didn't work and wasn't altogether "present" very much. Dylan tastes them.

Dylan: "Frannie. Ray and Frannie."

Caleb: "She never even told you their names?"

Dylan: "She told me things. Not a lot. And you don't know if it's true, or just..."

Caleb: "Norma Louise. She pulls you in so close you're as close as two people can be, and then suddenly you're *out*."

Dylan: "Something like that. Where did you go? Where have you been?"

Caleb: "Costa Rica. I have these friends, a married couple, who own this funky hotel resort. They're getting a divorce and want to sell, for like 60% of what it's worth, but only to somebody they know. I felt like it was a gift from God. Something I could give Norma, if I could just pull it together. Like a reward I could bring her, for ... everything."

Dylan: "Yeah, about that. What is that?"

Caleb: "I kept waiting to grow up, to get bigger than him, but it just... never happened. For all I knew, every family was like ours. I'm a man now, so I get how worthless he must have felt. But I wasn't a man then, and Norma sure wasn't and he just took it out on us."

Dylan: "Norman just straight *murdered* his, but I see your point."

Caleb: "Such a pretty little kid. Such a trusting girl, and I couldn't protect her. She wants to forget what happened and that means forgetting me, blaming me. I get it, I blame me too. I always have. But when I heard she was in the hotel business now too, I don't know. It seemed like fate. I thought maybe enough time had passed she'd give me a minute. I guess a lot of things seem like fate, and then they're not."

Dylan means to help; he means it in a happy way when he says that maybe some things are fate, after all. He's not wrong.

#### HELDENS DOCK

George is sent out to the water, to find Norma, who's nursing a drink and looking out.

George: "Christine's stuck talking to some investors, so I was... I brought you an array of desserts, in case you missed the rush. I didn't want you screwed out of it by those people."

Norma: "What an astonishingly kind thing. You're an oddly nice man. What's your game?"

George: "I recommend this raspberry thing, or this... nutty chocolate blob."

Norma: "How long have you known Christine? Long enough to vet you?"

George: "I'm her brother, so. A while. I should tell you everything up front. She sent me to check up on you, yes, but also to be thoughtful and charming and not talk about my divorce."

Norma: "Oh, I remember your human rituals now. I get it. Does she set you up a lot?"

George: "Never before today. Which says something about one of us. Hopefully you."

Norma: "This is a nice fantasy, Michael Vartan, but honestly I think I am about to lose it."

George: "You haven't even been a widow a year..."

Norma: "That is the *least* of our concerns right now, sir."

George: "Well, have another cookie and don't worry about it."

She puts a berry in her mouth and smiles at him, still sort of tracing her fingers along this idea that a man could be nice and not make demands, not try to trick you. With both hands out in front of him, how could he be hiding anything?

## BONFIRE

Emma's had a few by the time she spots that cute boy that gave her the weed cupcake that time, and flails herself in his direction, feeling brave and adorable.

Emma: "You're selling weed, Cupcake Boy!"

Cupcake: "Yeah, it's a beach party."

Emma: "Actually it's a wake."

Cupcake: "Then I'm an even better public servant than I knew."

Emma: "You're lucky I don't actually give a shit about this girl. Sit down over here."

He does; they are very young and very adorable.

"We're not dead, okay? We're alive. So we should live, but we're gonna die, you know. Maybe soon. So let's do something... let's just... go *completely crazy*. Make bad choices with me."

Bad choices are made; we reconvene a bit later, sun finally gone down. Emma has continued to make her choices, stomping around with a bottle of beer, complaining about the boys pissing in the bonfire before describing Cupcake's hair in a bizarre way. He's indulgent, listening to her babble; when he offers to take her home she's willing, and when he offers to stop for food first, she boots.

Over at the bonfire, Cody's in Philip's lap, grinding, while Norman sits nervously next to them, feeling as out of place as the first time, that neon kitchen with Bradley. Impatient, without stopping, Philip puts his hand on Norman's knee, and when it's thrown off he replaces it a good several inches further up.

Norman has had enough! He stumbles up, explaining that he is done for the night and Cody asks him to

walk her home. Norman hasn't got much of a goodbye for Philip at this time, but all in all I would say he made a pretty good show for himself.

NICK FORD

While Norma waits for the valet, Nick Ford steps up, out of the shadows, to congratulate her on her meltdown at the last City Council meeting. He wasn't there, but word gets around.

Nick: "Not many people would have the guts to do that."

Norma: "That's one word for it. Are you yourself in favor? Of the highway bypass?"

Nick: "No, but I can't really talk about that at City Council, for multiple reasons. WPB is like, you have to get along with everybody on the playground, you know?"

Norma: "So my drug-dealer son keeps trying to explain. Good night, sir."

Nick gets in his car, and she chases him down the driveway, suddenly friendly again.

Norma: "I just haven't met anyone else against the bypass that also seems to know how things work in this town. Maybe I could buy you a coffee sometime?"

Nick: "Whatever complicates your life as much as possible, Mrs. Bates. As per usual."

BAR

Sometime between sundown and now, Dylan left his uncle at the bar for a second so he could grab a dufflebag and stuff it with \$11.5k, his cash savings at this time: "I can probably make it 15 in the next couple months..." Caleb throws his arms around the kid without a second thought, giving thanks; proud of Dylan, almost, but mostly just relieved and excited and impressed.

Caleb: "Where did you *come* from, kid? Damn, you're too much."

Dylan: "I'm going to try again with Norma. To at least give you time to explain why you're here. I think it would be good for her and for, um, everybody."

Caleb: "I'm not going to say no to that. Just tell me when you're coming to Costa Rica!"

Dylan: "How about right now?"

Caleb: "You're laughing, I'm laughing!"

Dylan: "Because the truth is too awful to take seriously! Which is that I am probably going to die in a drug war I accidentally started!"

CODY

Norman: "Cody, I'm sorry but I need to blow your mind. I think your boyfriend might be, um, gay."

Cody: "Ha! Uh, yeah. Also he's not my boyfriend."

Norman: "Why were you making out with him, then? Theatre people are the worst."

Cody: "Essentially that's the answer. Parties are for making out, it doesn't mean anything. He got nervous. Anyway, aren't you gay?"

Norman: "What I am there is not a word for. I mean, probably, but we'll never know. And Mother is... I guess whatever is the opposite of heterosexual."

Cody: "So, gay?"

Norman: "No, just like... very bad news."

Cody: "Like how every Satanist is already also a Christian because that's the framework they're trapped working against?"

Norman: "Exactly. Is this your house?"

Cody: "Yeah. I have to shinny up a drainpipe because my dad is nonspecifically scary. Philip is going to be so disappointed."

Norman: "He's probably better off, frankly. See you tomorrow."

#### KITCHEN

Norma: "Hey, I was just doing some dishes and having a lovely evening. You?"

Dylan: "I am here to start shit with you about your brother Caleb. I had dinner with him and I love him and I want you to be nice to him and we can all move away to Costa Rica. He told me everything."

Norma: "I'm sure."

Dylan: "Like your Dad was... Norma, I knew you were strong, but I don't know how you survived it."

Norma: "Uh huh. Yeah, I'm doin' *great*."

Dylan: "...You must be so angry. He says you're right to blame him, but I just think..."

Norma: "Oh for fuck's sake, Dylan. He raped me. Over and over, every day, for years."

Dylan: "Don't be an asshole!"

Things get kind of messy at this point, because -- unlike Norman -- Dylan has noticed how Norma's freakouts tend to coincide with getting her way: That she might not even know how effectively she changes the temperature in the room to extract various effects. But he's not aware -- unlike Norman -- that she's telling the truth: All he knows is she has never treated him like a person, like family, or talked about who he is or where he came from and this man Caleb made up for that whole life of silence in one night.

Norma: "My *own way*? I have never gotten my own way, ever! And that includes being your damn mother!"

Dylan: "So you don't like him, so none of us can like him, the end. I'm so sure he raped you."

Norma: "Uh, he totally did? Why is this a discussion, you weren't there."

Dylan: "I don't need to be! I know what you are, I know how you roll."

Norma: "He raped me, and I had no one to protect me..."

Which is what Norman walks into, right after it starts threatening to get physical. He goes into ass-beat mode and, after a brief tussle, gets the upper hand, and eventually just starts tearing Dylan's whole face up. Norman's point is less that Dylan is threatening their mother physically and more that he is continuing to bring danger into the home, which gives him something to fight which he's needed since he found out Caleb was in town.

Dylan's point is that once again Norman is just doing his Norman thing, and Norma's doing her Norma thing, and that their closed ranks are -- as usual -- preventing him from becoming a self-actualized

individual with both roots and wings. Forcing on him this wood-and-wire life, with soft warmth always just out of reach.

Norma's point is that she treats Dylan like shit because mostly he pulls crap like this --pushing in, always forcing, always too demanding and too hard -- but moreso that in this one particular case she feels compassion for it, and wants Norman to stop beating up on him just this one time, because enough is enough.

"Norman, stop it! Stop it, he can't help it! It's his dad!"

Dylan comes apart in Norman's hands, and both her sons go still. And then all she can do is apologize.

Nobody's sure about exactly what.

## Check-Out, 204

### "The Possum Symphony"

#### PREVIOUSLY

Christine Heldens wants to make Norma a permanent fixture via her brother George, regardless of what Norman thinks about all that. Norman and Emma made new friends at Bradley's memorial service. Dylan made a new friend who turned out to be his uncle, who turned out to *also* be his dad -- which Norma only admitted so Norman would stop beating up his brother like some kind of psycho -- and which has now obviously sent all three of the Massett/Bateses into total meltdown.

#### RM 420

Emma wakes up looking even more beautiful than she always does, in a room of the motel where she works, next to a tuckered-out Cupcake Boy. Fearing the worst, she gets hers shit together and drags her O2 tank outside, where a curious child and a worried mom draw near.

Emma: "This is just my tank, I am fine, don't pester me about my congenital situation."

Mom: "Okay but like is there a manager here? I wasn't actually concerned about you."

Emma: "I am basically the manager. Which makes it all the more convenient that I woke up on the premises."

Mom: "Okay because there is a very sympathetic boy passed out in that truck over there, covered in puke. Seems like something you should be aware of."

Emma is worried immediately to see Dylan's dire state, can't rouse him, and is immediately faced with a thickness and a pukiness when she opens the truck door and -- "Oops, whup, nope, back in, back in" -- he comes spilling out on top of her, still out of it. She always makes the best faces!

#### UP THE HILL

She has to poke Norman about five times before he wakes up, wild-eyed, and the relief that Dylan's nearby and not wrapped around a telephone pole, or worse, doesn't quite get in the way of covering for Norma: "She had a tough night," he says. "I can help."

After an awkward "I'm in my boxers" moment, he's dressed and downstairs. Those two kids are becoming old hands at carrying half-dead people around that motel! They get him into a bed and start tugging at his shoes; Emma is, of course, curious.

Emma: "What on Earth is this? Do you think he has alcohol poisoning? Did he get fired from being a drug mercenary? Did he get into a fight with somebody?"

Norman: "I don't know, *Emma*. Stop asking me questions, *Emma*. It is too weird to *talk about* so stop *talking*."

They used to be really good friends. Maybe they still can be. Norma shows up, looking pretty ratchet in her own right, and just kind of stares around at everybody.

Norma: "What happened here?"

Norman: "Emma found him. He is broken."

Norma: "Mmkay, you guys go mind the office and I'll hover awkwardly over his body trying to figure out my entire life."

Emma: "Shouldn't somebody stay with..."

Norma: "Why are you here at seven AM?"

Emma: "Work ethic?"

Norma: "Sure, I'll take it."

She floats over him, like magnets repelling; she wants to touch him and she wants nothing less in this world than to touch him. He is beautiful, this person that should not exist. He's not the one with the broken genes, or the broken mind; he's not the one that's tainted. So why can't she touch him? She awkwardly pulls the duvet up around him and, saddest and sweetest of all, tucks the covers around his body, swaddling him tight.

Norman: "Mother? Mother? Mother? Should we do something?"

Norma: "Like what, Norman? Build a time machine to before my awful life?"

Norman: "I was thinking hugs? Hugs usually do it."

Norma: "I know what I need to do. I need to drive across town to the Kings' motel where your uncle is staying, and I need to have a good old-fashioned Norma Bates freakout. If I turn it up to eleven he might skip town on *foot*."

Norman: "Mother? Mother? Mother? I am worried for your safety, emotionally. Also how does any of this help Dylan get over being a secret incest baby?"

Norma: "That's either going to happen or it's not, Norman. This is about me, feeling weird. Stay with your brother-cousin."

She makes it all the way across town and to the parking lot before she breaks the hell down, full-on panic attack, and then swings her old whip back onto the road with some of that erratic Norma Bates driving magic we've missed so much.

I don't really know what happened. I wonder if we'll ever know what happened. Caleb has a capacity for darkness and for violence; he has a capability to forget matched only by his sister's, and her son's. But I do know there is only so much freaking out inside of Norma Bates to go around. It's a near-infinite amount I will grant you, but without anybody looking you can see on her face that this isn't about anger: This really *is* about fear.

I didn't think about it last week, but that scene when she walks into the kitchen and sees Caleb there, and throws down, it isn't just about wanting Caleb gone, it's about wanting Caleb out of the same room as Dylan. Not protecting him, necessarily or entirely, just keeping the whole story from all being true at

the same time. She doesn't want Caleb in Dylan's life because she doesn't want Caleb in *her* life, and having both of them at the same time is like...

One of my favorite, most horrible things in all of music is this feedback whine that happens for about a minute and ten seconds in the very scary song "Possum Kingdom" by the Toadies, **starting around 3:12**. It moves around a little bit at the start, but then settles in, right into that mosquito place, until you forget it's there. Lead guitar's doing stuff, bass is doing stuff, but he's still in the back of the room, standing in the shadows. And just when you're sort of calmed by this creepy lullaby chant happening for several bars, it *swoops* down on you, roaring like a chainsaw: It was there the whole time. *Looking at you*. It's a sickening moment, it's art because of how it relates to the song itself -- when it happens and why -- but it's mostly vertiginous, and it makes you very glad the song is not real life.

Or sometimes you can hear the refrigerator running, right, and then that's all you hear. You can't think about not thinking about it, so the more you try not to hear it, the more you hear it. And that's Dylan. That's the scar on her leg and that's Caleb too, true, but those are just parts of this Dylan symphony, just below the conscious level, ever since he was born.

And so I would imagine having them both in the same area -- specifically her home, at the top of the hill; specifically the kitchen where she was raped on day one -- is kind of like that refrigerator whine getting louder and louder and louder and LOUDER AND LOUDER, UNTIL IT'S *SCREAMING*.

So, good for her for getting that close, before she ran again.

#### MOTEL OFC

Emma is catching hell from a Mr. Woodbury on the phone, who would like to check out later than 11 despite the room being promised to somebody else, when she spots Cupcake getting in his car, and of course she ducks behind the desk, stuttering and rolling her eyes: "You know what, whenever's fine, just check out whenever, okay bye." When she hears the engine turn over, she pulls herself slowly up, to watch him drive away.

#### DYLAN

Norman has brought him breakfast, and a clean shirt; he's up and moving around enough to be shirtless, still staring into space.

Dylan: "How long have you known?"

Norman: "About what? The big thing? I didn't know the big thing until last night. We don't really have to talk about it. We don't really have to do anything. How can I fix you?"

Dylan pisses with the door open, still processing: It all makes sense.

"I find that hard to believe. Because now I understand why I've always been on the outside of this family. It shakes a lot of things into place. It must have been pretty funny to you two..."



Norman: "I don't know if you've met Mother, but she is not really forthcoming with the..."

Dylan: "Yeah, she treats herself pretty well. Nothing too painful."

Norman: "Look, it's just a piece of information. Nothing actually changes with us. We're all the same people as we were yesterday."

Dylan: "Total bullshit. What if somebody told *you* something?"

Norman wobbles on his feet and Dylan steps forward, cruel.

Dylan: "Some 'piece of information' that changes everything you thought about yourself? For the rest of your life?"

Norman: "You're right. I can't imagine anything like that."

Dylan: "Maybe you should talk to 'Mother,' then. Just in case."

Norman gets scared, as Dylan presses -- "Maybe we don't all know who we are. Maybe someone's been lying to you about an important event that happened in your life that you have no consciousness of..." -- until he finally hears himself, and backs off. Irrevocable things. He throws Norman out, so Norman heads to the office to get bitchy on Emma.

OFC

Norman: "Nope. Can't tell you, can't talk about it, don't ask."

Emma: "Are you forgetting what we've been through in the last six months? Your Mom, the Deputy, the Chinese sex slave? Have I still not been jumped in? I'm not an outsider."

Norman: "That is all we are. It's a family matter, that's all I can say."

DOCKS

When Caleb approaches Dylan -- overjoyed, chuckling; wanting to take him fishing -- you can practically hear that feedback starting. He freezes up, bruised eyes, confused and somehow even hoping this is some weird misunderstanding or new flavor of Norma's madness, but finished too with trusting him.

Dylan: "We can't ... talk anymore. Due to you raping your sister, my mother."

Caleb: "Whoa, it wasn't like that. It was a long time ago and it wasn't exactly like that."

Dylan: "So she's lying?"

Caleb: "I'm not saying that either."

Dylan: "Okay. Did you know I'm your son? Is that why you came here, to work some angle?"

Caleb: "This is like some dysfunctional game of Telephone. She married a guy in high school, she got knocked up, that's your dad."

Still not denying it, any single part of it, exactly. Mr. Massett was Dylan's dad, but was he his *father*? Caleb hands over the cash from last night, and backs away: "Whatever is going on here, I clearly should not have come to White Pine Bay."

Town motto.

## UP THE HILL

Norman quietly, not to say stealthily, watches Norma make a sandwich with a seriously huge knife. When the phone rings, he answers it immediately; she waves the knife around like she does, protesting, but finally takes the call. She shakes the fear and rage and nausea off like a dog, and smiles into the receiver.

Christine: "You were the hit of the party, my brother couldn't stop talking about you, he tried to do your Grand Canyon imitation and almost fell into the pool..."

Norma: "I am going down in flames."

Christine: "Peter called in a favor and got us a table at the Greene Tavern, aka probably the best restaurant in Oregon, multiple courses, wine pairings, the whole thing..."

Norma: "For real, I can't do it. No matter how much I love the obsessive attention you provide, I am not up to living life today. I managed to take a thing that was irretrievably broken, and break it. The walls are closing in. There's this weird mosquito sound..."

Later, Norman sits on the bed, where she is strewn like driftwood, staring into the mirror.

"You know, you could have told me. I get why you didn't tell Dylan, because look what happened, but you could have told me. You can always tell me everything. You *have* to tell me everything."

They lie side by side in the bed, looking up at the ceiling like two halves of something.

Norma: "Well, now you know everything I guess."

Norman: "There's nothing else? No interesting information about me losing time and killing various people, for instance?"

Norma: "Not to change the subject -- *and I'm not* -- but I went over there to make him leave, and tell him I remember everything, and that I wasn't scared anymore... But I couldn't."

Norman: "A thing you couldn't do, Mother? What a terrible thought!"

Norma: "Yeah, like it could bring the whole sky down."

He wraps himself around her, laying his cheek alongside hers. Their arms and hands make pretzels, octopods. He smiles sleepily, like a baby at the breast.

Norman: "You don't need to. You don't ever have to see him again."

Norma: "I'll run into him in town, in this place where we live, at the market or the gas station..."

Norman: "I feel like you're trying to tell me something but all I can hear is wanting you to be quiet, stop shivering, stop worrying."

Norma: "He wanted our money and he got Dylan's money and..."

Norman: "So now he'll leave, then. Just don't worry. I will take care of you."

It's a lover's murmur; he is greedy. The term is polymorphously perverse, but I don't know what connotations you bring to that; it's not pruriently sexual, any more than a fetus masturbating in the womb is prurient. Every part of their body that is not touching, should be touching; they are halves of something. Before they ate of the fruit, they didn't know they were naked: Eden's first crime was the invention of crimes. He hasn't been this available, this much hers, all summer.

Perhaps it is because she is falling apart, and he needs to put her back together. Perhaps it's the idea of Dylan being her child, and not just some man from the outside world, having some claim upon this body.

Perhaps it is Caleb. Whining in the symphony, waiting to drill down.

CHRISTINE

"I know something about you, Norma Bates."

As happy as she is, involuntarily, even just to see her friend, Norma's wary; at this, her face drops entirely.

Christine: "You're afraid to put yourself out there! But I'm not gonna take no for an answer. Come on, let's find you some clothes."

She drags Norma, giggling, up the stairs and into a *solid* LBD, correctly guessing that it will look amazing on her, and then chooses the perfect shoes. Norma demurs, finally, looking at herself in the mirror, and Christine steps up to the plate, standing in Norman's space, looking over Norma's shoulder like he does.

"Norma Bates. Stop resisting. You are a beautiful, young woman, living alone with your teenage son. But he's not gonna be here forever, you know."

Yes, he is.

"People aren't meant to live alone."

No. They're not.

Norma: "I don't know how to. So many bad things have happened."

Christine: "One step at a time, in these shoes I've picked out. George will be here at seven, and we'll meet at the restaurant."

If anybody else told Norma Bates to stop resisting, she would smash her head through the window and start screaming bloody murder. It is really something, to be loved.

ZANE

Remo can't even manage more than an eyebrow woggle, when Zane stomps through the place, issuing orders. Telling "Masset" to meet a man, and bring back loads of gun and ammo. Fair Verona has them, and there is no stopping it: Zane Morgan is a man without an exit strategy. If the number one issue facing Bateses today is poisoned masculinity, the ugly concrete world, then Zane Morgan is a blister, a carbuncle, a pimple: Masculinity performing itself without an instruction manual, without forebears or precedents, in a hall of mirrors. A feedback loop; a whine in the symphony, tuning up.

Dylan was never so beautiful as the moment he got his first gun, pulling on himself in the mirror like a tiny sheriff, like an angelic Clint Eastwood. How is it that watching Zane do the same thing, over and over and over, feels less even like a tragedy waiting -- impatiently slaving -- to happen, and more just like

watching someone embarrass himself so thoroughly that you can't even pity him? Zane thinks life is the movies, and maybe he's right. But his taste in movies is for shit.

OFC

In the back office, Emma ducking Cupcake as he returns from his day selling weed, Norman's got pop radio pumped. Drowning it out, while he mapquests Caleb's motel. Burning bright:

"I've got the eye of the tiger," she sings. "Dancing through the fire..."

He's researching, he lies; looking into the competition. What he's doing is hunting.

"I am a champion..."

Emma shrugs. It would be easier if he just shut her down, instead of lying.

"And you're gonna hear me *roar*."

When he asks her about Cupcake, why she keeps hiding from a guest, she shrugs again: "There's a difference between *hiding* and not wanting to be seen."

*You hear my voice? You hear that sound?*

*Like thunder gonna shake the ground*

*You held me down, but I got up*

Cody shoves past Emma into the back room, shouting at Norman for leaving her hanging this morning at the play set. They were supposed to paint all those happy trees today, and he flaked. He can't tell her why, so she writes her number on his arm and storms out again: "Next time, call me," she says. "When you say you're gonna do something, do it."

Emma sniffs. Cody Brennan dropped out. Mother won't like that. What Emma means is, our definition of *outsider* is changing too fast for comfort. Bradley's gone and she's feeling independent but that doesn't mean it doesn't smart. Cody Brennan is six miles of bad road visible from space, and she writes on Norman's body; Norman hasn't talked to Emma about anything all summer. He hasn't been available, hasn't been hers.

When you say you're going to do something, you have to do it. You are a champion.

UPSTAIRS

He watches with one eye, hidden by the door, as his mother dresses.

Norma: "Zip me? Christine invited me, some get-together with her and her brother, I'd rather shoot myself."

He puts his arms around her shoulders like the man of the house, like Christine, and offers counsel: That taking her mind off these things for a few hours, dinner with a sensible gal-pal, could be just the ticket. Get those knots out. He'd maybe get stuck on the George part, too, if she hadn't so skillfully mentioned how suicidally repulsive he is, as a concept.

Dylan's up the stairs before they catch him out: Standing in the exact same place he held his mother's hands up over her head, that terrible night, and forced her to be still.

Norma: "Dylan? We should talk?"

Dylan: "About what, Norma."

Norma: "Don't make this harder on me than it already..."

Dylan: "Yeah. I'm such a dick."

They recoil as a team; as a team they peer at him, owlishly.

"What do you both *want* from me? A time machine, a magic wand? That works in Norma world, that works in the house on the hill, but not anywhere real. Those of us in the concrete world abide by consequence. You are looking at one, Norma. *I am a consequence.*"

Norma: "You're *not* just a consequence. You need to be strong, you need to put this behind you..."

Dylan: "I can't... It's me. We're talking about me. How can I put me *behind* me?"

Norma: "I do it all the time. He's just a piece of information. He's a bad person, here to do bad things. To steal your precious money and work an angle."

Dylan: "Really? Because he handed this right over the second I told him your story."

Norma: "You *saw* him? What else did he *say*?"

Dylan: "Don't be gross, Norma. Just forget it, I can't talk to you about him. You can't both exist in the same story at the same time. It makes me feel like a Picasso, ripping in half."

When the doorbell rings, Norman answers it. His face drops just as coldly as his mother's.

Norman: "Hello there."

George: "You must be Norman."

Norman: "And what the fuck is actually going on *here*?"

George: "Norma, you look fantastic! Wow!"

She *prances* down the stairs toward his regard, like Baby Jane Hudson doing Scarlett O'Hara, for one tiny millisecond; Norman nearly fucking boots.

Norman: "Mother? Mother? Mother? *What time do you think you'll be back?*"

George: "I'll make sure she doesn't get into trouble!"

Norman: "*Who do you think you are, gonna come in here, fuckin' talk to me like some kind of goddamn Eddie Haskell motherfucker? This ain't a joke.*"

THEATRE

Cody: "Norman you do realize that the point is to hammer the nails into the wood, not through it, right? There should be wood left when you are done instead of just splinters?"

Norman: "I am freaking out, Cody. Sorry."

Cody: "Is it because that girl died? Or because we thought you were gay?"

Norman: "Neither of those things actually bother me, Cody. It is because of my mother. Specifically for thirty-seven different reasons."

Cody: "Single parent families mean the parent sucks twice as much, or more."

Norman: "I get that you're from a broken, abusive home, yadda yadda, but my mom's not like that. Her abuse is subtle and apocalyptic and entirely unconscious."

Cody: "What makes your mom so special, huh?"

Norman: "She would do literally anything for me. And vice versa. Do you know anybody that would do literally anything for you? Because I do. We are each other's champions."

Cody: "That sounds excellent, actually."

Norman: "She tries so fucking hard. And the terrible shit is neverending, and..."

Cody: "Whoa, you are flipping out. Tell me what is going on."

Norman: "Short version is, her brother showed up out of nowhere. *Bad* dude."

Cody: "How bad? Because I know bad."

Norman: "Very bad. Whatever you are thinking."

Cody: "...Gotcha. Let's go beat the shit out of him, then. Say no more."

420

Cupcake Boy: "Cupcake Girl. Hi."

Emma: "You are so beautiful, all the time. Listen, I hate to bother you..."

Cupcake: "You're not. Trust me."

Emma: "Can I ask you a very simple, yes-or-no question?"

Cupcake: "We didn't sleep together. I just didn't know what to do with you. I mean, I would. I would like to. But I have this weird thing where I don't rape girls. I'd like to think you would remember it, if we did."

Emma: "That is such a relief!"

Cupcake: "*Oh is it?*"

Emma: "Yeah. Anyway, you're all checked in and everything?"

Cupcake: "Yeah, you did it last night. Right before barfing. It was adorable."

Emma: "Sorry!"

Cupcake: "I'm going to be around, though. Selling pot for the summer."

Emma: "Cool, well, you have fun with that, and thanks for looking out for me."

Cupcake: "I don't know how else to impress upon you that it is not a problem."

GREENE TAVERN

Peter likes being the alpha, at the head of the table, going on and on about his wife's spending habits before settling on the new Costco opening up.

Christine: "He's obsessed. Costco appeals to his hunter-gatherer instincts."

Peter: "Right out by the new bypass road! A retail corridor is just what this town needs."

Norma: "Not what I need, though. It's going to ruin my life, ha ha!"

Christine: "Honey, you have boutique appeal. Plenty of tourists will want to come into town the old way..."

Peter: "Liar! Condescender! Remember Route 66?"

Christine: "Seriously shut the hell up. This chick is 98% ready to unravel on a *good* day."

Peter: "Face the day bravely, that's what I say!"

Norma: "Can't blame a guy for getting excited about buying in bulk. If you'll excuse me for a moment, I have to have about sixty seconds of a mental breakdown in the powder room."

George: "So now you know our dirty little secret. Peter is fucking awful."

Norma: "It's totally fine! Being forced into society by your sister means biting my tongue. A thing I literally just learned I can do."

George: "If somebody was making jokes about my precarious small-business life dreams, I would scream into a hand towel in the bathroom too. Let's go get some crème brûlée down your neck, what do you say?"

CODY

"You gotta show 'em you're serious. My family is trash, just complete garbage, so I have tons of experience. My aunt's ex was a prick, wouldn't pay alimony, so my grandma hit 'im with a baseball bat and guess what? Paid right up."

She hands Norman a tire iron -- scooped out from under the seats as she weaves down the road, startling him into mania -- and explains that it is now his superpower.

KINGS

In the parking lot, as Cody is wheedling Caleb's room number out of the clerk, another power kicks in: "Norman, can I tell you something that I've never told anyone?" Last year's finale conversation, from his disjointed perspective, as he imagines those memories so vividly they become his own. Like Jiao, beautiful girls on paper who became real in his mind; forced themselves into the real world. But this time, it's Mother.

They get up the stairs and halfway down before he gets scared, reverts, hangs back. But when you say you are going to do something, you do it. Cody has been waiting for who knows how long for an opportunity like this: To beat the shit out of somebody who deserves it. To scare evil out of town, and away forever. She forces the issue, and he raises the tire iron above his head, to swat her away. It scares them both enough that they leave; they don't talk on the ride back across town.

420

Cupcake: "Can I ask you something? When you said you were relieved we didn't hook up... What was that? I know you're not *not* interested."

Emma: "Oh, I *do* want to have sex with you. For sure."

*(They are collectively and separately amazed and delighted that she just said this.)*

Cupcake: "What are you doing tonight? Heh."

Emma: "HA! HA! No, I'm, uh. It would have been my first time..."

Cupcake: "Hang on, processing that. Okay, continue."

Emma: "You couldn't see it all over me? That's interesting."

"Just... Think how much pressure people put on their first time. Knowing that they're going to have like a million more. Mine could be my *only* time, so I just... Wanted to make it count. Or at least be something I can actually remember."

Cupcake: "You're right. You deserve that."

Emma: "...!"

Cupcake: "See you tomorrow?"

Emma: "Oh, I'll be here."

Cupcake: "Yeah. Me too."

He's back into his room before she breaks out the big smile, at least. Burning bright.

GEORGE

Norma: "I really shouldn't have gone, I'm so sorry."

George: "The food was good. The company was mostly good. I wouldn't stress."

Norma: "Christine just *really*..."

George: "Oh, I know how she is. Growing up with her... She was a force of nature."

Norma: "Yeah, so. Like that. She's been nothing but nice to me..."

George: "She's ... taken with you."

When they arrive, she sits for a moment, nervously. She has forgotten how to date. Is this remembering? He asks her out again, and promises to leave Peter home. She doesn't say yes. More loudly, she doesn't say no.

DOCKS

Romero: "So you're Zane Morgan, right? I thought we should meet."

Zane: "Alex Romero. The guy with the God complex."

Romero: "Put out that cigarette and walk your ass over here and say that."

He does, cracking a beer. He's a Sweathog, dirtbag, back of the class wastoid on the day you have a substitute. Lord of a possum kingdom, scavenging garbage in the darkness. It's so gross, and Romero is *so* ready to put him down, just from looking at him. It's all over his face.

Romero: "You were away a long time, Zane. Maybe you forgot exactly how it works in WPB?"

Zane: "Didn't end so well for Gil, so I figured there might be a better way..."



Romero: "I assure you there is not."

Zane: "Who you lookin' at, ya mook?"

Romero: "Ugh. Look. A guy like you, maybe you take things personally, maybe make some mistakes, because you have something to prove. Make the most noise, do the most damage. Take the most scalps, so people will -- *finally* -- take you seriously."

Zane: "You want a beer?"

"Okay, cool. I'm gonna take that as confirmation that you actually heard me? Because Zane, I am trying to help you out here. This is a warning. I am a really nice guy. Until I break you."

He's Romero, he's great. But I don't get how you could get such a perfect read on him -- or the fact that he is singlehandedly responsible for this gang war -- and not understand that the cop's got the biggest target on his back, for somebody like that. Dirtbags hate cops, that's the number one thing they have in common, and he is looking to be king of dirtbags, ruler of the possum kingdom, and you just turned the amp up a little louder. I guess he is interested in seeing what Zane would do with a faceful of unadulterated authority figure? But the answer is clearly, "Burn down your house."

#### KITCHEN

Norma is still in her hot black dress with her red lipstick, leaning way back at the kitchen table, drinking bullet-cold vodka straight, when Dylan arrives with the first boxes.

Norma: "And what is this, exactly."

Dylan: "I am moving out, Norma. And not even you could be so Norma Bates as to ask me why..."

Norma: "-- Why? Why on *Earth*? Why do you have to move? What's that gonna prove?"

Dylan: "You made the mess, live with it. I am the wreckage."

Norma: "Blame the victim, why don't ya. What the hell did *he* tell you?"

Dylan: "Well, he says it wasn't like you said it was -- whatever that means -- and that Mr. Massett was really my father anyway."

Norma: "Do you think I would tell him that he got me pregnant? Why would he need to know any of that story? What makes you think I'd ever tell *anyone*?"

Then comes the real question: Why do I exist? Why did you have me? That one, she can't answer.

Cody checks in again with Norman when she drops him off -- he's a skittish, sensitive, confusing boy; she maybe fucked the whole thing up, pushing -- and while he says he's fine, he slams the door and doesn't look back.

On the threshold of the foyer, Norman hangs back, listening to the story once again. The story of a mother made from wire and wood.

Norma: "What do you mean? What's *your* theory, about why I kept you?"

Dylan: "Fine. You used me, to get out. You get knocked up by your brother, and use me to get your boyfriend to marry you. You made my dad think he was my dad. You brought me into this world, an

abomination that should not exist, because it was useful to you. I am the consequence."

Norma: "Dylan, better men than you have tried to explain what a narcissist I am, there will be no effect going that route. Just listen. I was a little girl, with nobody to protect me. My father scared the crap out of me, my mother was sedated all the time -- those parts were true -- and my brother would *not* leave me alone. I had to get away."

"I had no voice, to tell him not to do it. I had no power to stop him."

Norma: "None of this is your fault. But it's not my fault either. I was a child, I was way younger than your brother is now!"

He's getting older all the time.

Dylan tries to flee, and she puts herself between him and the world; only raising his man's voice can move her. And then he's gone. And around the corner, Norman waits, and thinks, and then stops thinking. Norma runs out onto the porch in her bare feet, a Sirk vision in the middle of the night, sobbing. But she doesn't call him back.

KINGS

Caleb doesn't recognize his nephew, when he knocks on the motel door. Why would he? He was born to be the antidote, to all that. To give back the parts of the world she had lost. He is burning bright; like thunder, shaking the ground.

When Caleb tries to close the door, Norman kicks it open again; he is steady as an oak. He is a champion.

Caleb: "Ugh, the other one? I have nothing to say to *any* of you. Whatever I was thinking, coming here, I have rethought it. Please don't force this issue. You will not enjoy the result."

Norman: "I said we're gonna talk! *I've been silenced long enough!*"

Caleb catches that it's weird, but he doesn't know what it means. Who just showed up, who's been in the corner, watching from the shadows, all day long. Who's about to roar.

"I came here to tell you that I remember what you did to me, and to face you, and tell you I'm not scared of you anymore. And all those nights you came in my room, I was too young to know the difference. I was too young. I just needed someone to care about me! And all you did was use me, you son of a bitch!"

That's when she pulls the knife. That's when she swoops, roaring like a chainsaw.

Caleb throws the boy around the room, into chairs, onto the beds, to stop the hateful, mesmerizing, confusing, deep-bass truth: "Don't lie again. You raped me. Over and over. I was your little sister, I loved you. You should have protected me, because I had no one to protect me."

For a second he's sympathetic, to the boy. This tortured creature, who opens his mouth and somebody else's words come out. Who closes his eyes, and somebody else's dreams show up. This boy who was

never raped, but has been raped all the same. For a second he wants to *save* that boy; it's the woman that won't stop fighting. Won't stop resisting.

Caleb leaves his nephew in a pile on the floor, grabs his bags, and disappears.

LATER

The woman at the diner inspects the catatonic boy, and finds a number written hastily on his arm. Better to call a friend, or family, than the cops; there's something so sweet about him, even when he's six feet down below the water.

One of the cops runs up to Alex Romero on the docks, to tell him to go home. When he gets there, it's to a symphony of alarms and sirens, as his house is burning to the ground.

Mother's gone, but Norman isn't back yet, when Cody arrives to pick him up, and take him home. She walks him like a puppet, one foot in front of the other, all the way to the car. All the way home

"...What the fuck happened to you, Norman Bates?"

*Life.*